



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

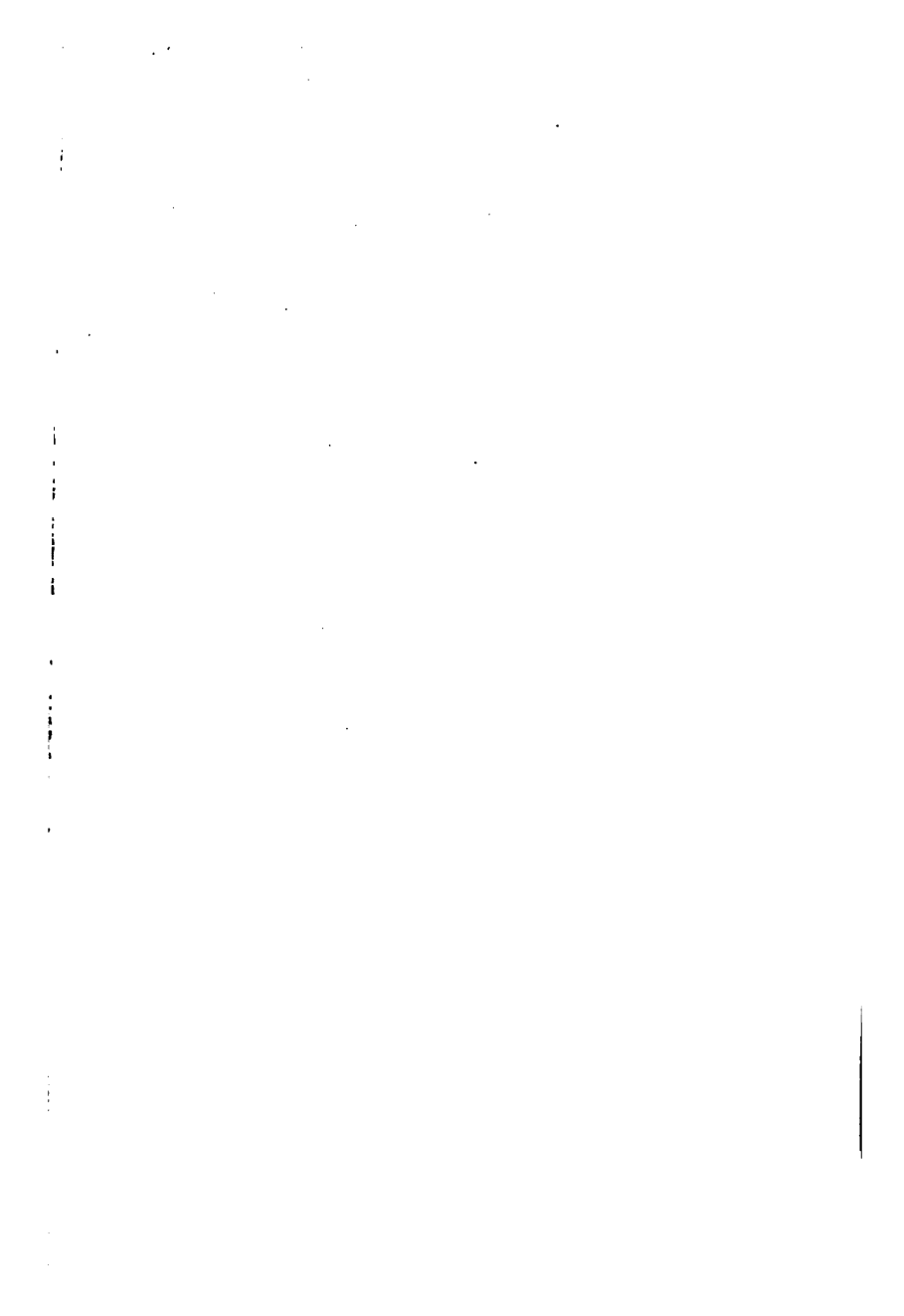
### About Google Book Search

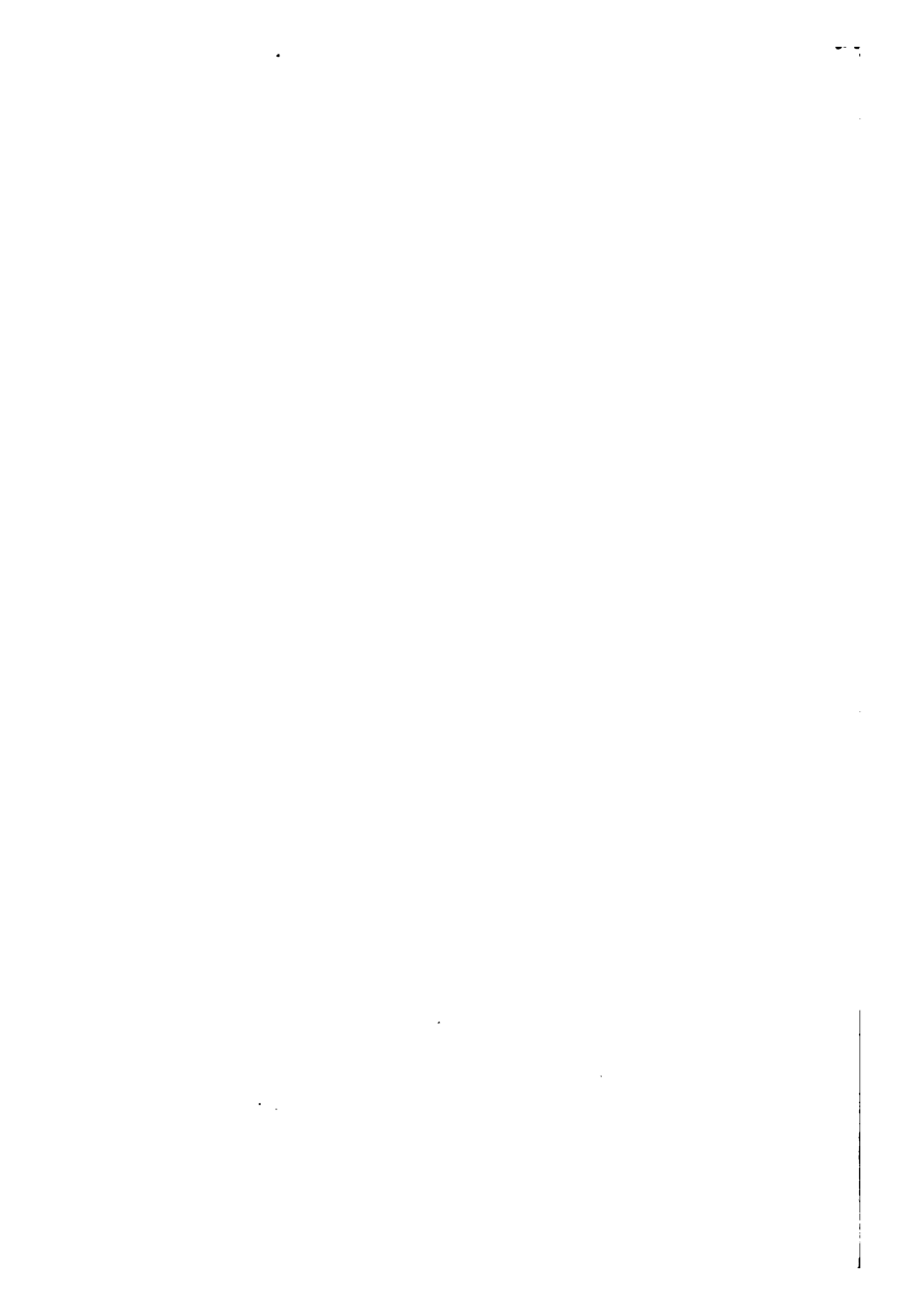
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

1897

Björnson  
NIK







**THE NOVELS OF**  
**BJÖRNSTJERNE BJÖRNSON**

*Edited by EDMUND GOSSE*

**VOLUME XII**

THE NOVELS OF  
**BJÖRNSTJERNE BJÖRNSSON**

Edited by **EDMUND GOSSE**

*Fcap. 8vo, cloth*

*Synnöve Solbakken*

*Arne*

*A Happy Boy*

*The Fisher Lass*

*The Bridal March, & One Day*

*Magnhild, & Dust*

*Captain Mansana, & Mother's Hands*

*Absalom's Hair, & A Painful Memory*

*In God's Way (2 vols.)*

*Heritage of the Kurts (2 vols.)*

NEW YORK  
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY



# THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

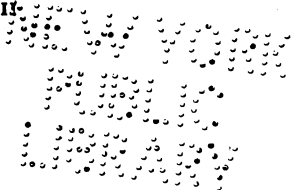
BY

BJÖRNSTJERNE BJÖRNSON

*Translated from the Norwegian by*

*CECIL FAIRFAX*

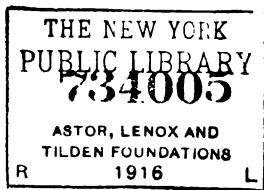
VOLUME II.



NEW YORK  
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1908

675.



*Printed in England*

NOV 21 1916  
NEW YORK

*All rights reserved*

# CONTENTS

## IV.—THE STAFF—(continued)

CHAP.	PAGE
II. THE STAFF . . . . .	I
III. THE SOCIETY . . . . .	46
IV. ON THE STEPS. . . . .	60

## V.—THE HUNT

I. THE HUNT . . . . .	81
II. IN THE DOVECOTE . . . . .	101
III. SEPARATED FROM THE OTHERS . . . . .	108
IV. THE HUNT . . . . .	121

## VI.—WHAT FIDELITY WILL SAY

I. HAPPINESS . . . . .	135
II. A MISFORTUNE . . . . .	147
III. PEACE-MAKING WITHIN, PROPOSALS OF PEACE WITHOUT . . . . .	156
IV. WAR . . . . .	178

## VII.—THE FIGHT ITSELF

I. IN BOTH CAMPS . . . . .	191
II. A GALA DAY IN TOWN AND HARBOUR . . . . .	215

WON VON  
21851  
VON 591

## CHAPTER II

### THE STAFF

Fair Milla and brown Tora,  
Broad Tinka and slender Nora.

It was disputed where this remarkable verse with its rhythm and rhyme was heard for the first time, whether in the senior Latin or senior Commercial. The dispute can never be settled now, but when these girls showed themselves it was often shouted, sung, and bawled after them—at first in turns with another by Dösen, which ran, "*Nora, Tora, ora pro nobis*;" but as it was incomplete, the names of Tinka and Milla not being mentioned, it was dropped in favour of the former. This one was also given up; it was perfectly well known who was father to the latest name for them; Rendalen called them on a certain occasion "The Staff," and after him the whole school, after it the boys' school, and at last all who were inclined to pay them a compliment. We know three of the Staff already—that is to say, we know them from the others, not more than that. "Fair Milla" is no other than Emilie Engel; she looked like a picture in enamel in her mourning. Broad

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

Tinka is Katinka Hansen, Augusta's sister, the contralto; and slender Nora is the Sheriff's daughter, the one who hid under the sail, the one with big eyes and wavy hair.

Brown Tora, on the other hand, we do not know, and she shall remain a little longer shrouded in mystery.

A year ago a new sheriff was appointed to that part of the country, a secretary in a government office, called Jens Tue, otherwise known as the ladies' man.\* Instead of becoming resident he went abroad with his wife, whose chest was rather delicate.

This lady had, by jealousy and insincerity, missed her true foothold in life, and both in her thoughts and actions she flitted like a bird from one interest to another; she wished to appear so immensely delighted, so taken up with intellectual questions and music—until one day her strength proved insufficient; she collapsed.

Her husband carried her off with him, and as during their tour he was all that was pleasant and amiable, her bird-like nature required nothing more. She came home again, well and happy.

It would have seemed more natural for Nora to remain at Christiania with her friends and relations. It was said certainly that Fru Rendalen's school was so very superior, but that could hardly be the whole explanation; all were curious about the Sheriff's daughter when she appeared. She was a fashionable young lady, tall and slender,

\* Pigerne Jens.

## THE STAFF

and if not exactly elegant, still stylish in dress and manner ; a little supercilious ; still she did not give offence—she was too pliable for that, too quick as well, entirely taken up with the fancy of the moment. She gave an impetus to all she did, and people forgive a great deal for that.

But no one would forgive her letter-writing, or the incredible number of letters which she received weekly ! Not the teachers, for she neglected the schoolwork ; not her companions, for she neglected them ; nay, she had hardly looked at them ! She went to sleep every night with inky fingers and a heap of letters beside her bed ; either she was writing letters or reading letters, or crying over them. During every recreation time she ran upstairs to add a few lines, or to read a letter over again which she had just received. As she was worried by the pursuit of the others, she disappeared after every meal. Where was she ? There was a hunt for her, and she was found up in the top attic, writing of course, this time upon a large barrel ; she was blue with cold. She had left at least twenty particular friends behind her at Christiania ; all the twenty wrote to her, and all received answers, long answers—one must never be shorter than the others. Happily, she had another passion, and it often chances that one thing counteracts another. She was crazy about music. She sang snatches of songs with great feeling, but, partly because at her age she could not sing much at a time, partly because she had not training enough to carry out a delicate interpretation, she could never properly render

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

anything as a whole. But even so, she was much admired by her companions, and by none more than Tinka Hansen. For Tinka was herself musical, but in another and more unpretending fashion. Like her sister Augusta, she had developed early, especially in her powers of conversation. Katinka was even-tempered, bright, dependable ; everything she played, and that was a great deal, she knew by heart. It was therefore she who obediently accompanied Nora's songs. But her execution was not worth much ; Nora very soon took her in hand, and was not satisfied until she had brought her to the point she wished ; Tinka was extremely grateful for all this.

One day Nora discovered Tinka's powerful contralto, and from that time there were duets and duets. Their age suggested prudence, and if Nora would not use moderation, Tinka both would and could. Nora was used to command, so there were quarrels ; but Tinka was so accustomed to conquer when her conscience told her that she was right, that Nora was completely vanquished. This was the foundation of their friendship. To have a friend who at once admired and restrained her was especially safe and good for Nora. But Nora acted upon Tinka like a succession of impressions of art upon one who has seen nothing up to that time. As Nora was absolutely confidential, it seemed to the conscientious Tinka that this ought to be returned.

Every one knew it, but not to a living being would she have admitted it : Tinka was engaged. He, the man, had just gone to college ; she had a



## THE STAFF

letter from him once a week ; for many reasons she did not wish to have them oftener. He was called Frederik—Frederik Tygesen ; his father was the stipendiary judge Tygesen, here in the town. Nora was "the first person in the world" whom she had told this to.

How delighted Nora was ! Really, properly engaged, with letters every week and the tacit consent of her parents. How had it come about ? Well, that was the odd thing about it ; they neither of them knew. They had once when she was eight years old, through an open door, heard Fru Rendalen and her mother talking about Augusta and Tomas Rendalen, about what *he* had said to *his* mother about Augusta, and what *she* had said to *her* mother about Tomas. Ever since then these children had been fond of each other, just as those other two had been ; but they had never spoken about it—never. A sincere friendship was founded between Nora and Tinka upon this confidence, and Tinka's friendship brought others with it. Nora was obliged to recall some of her interests from Christiania, and by degrees to form a new circle of admirers.

She began to write less frequently to the friends in Christiania, and the letters would begin, "It is a terribly long time since," or "I really am a wretch who——," or "Procrastination is to blame."

But there was a limit to those whom she could conquer in the new senior class, and this did not please her ; in fact, she principally coveted the friendship of those who withheld it, but all the

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

same she could not pass this boundary. The fact was that a queen had reigned there before her—nay, was there still. Her ways of gaining power were different from Nora's; whether they were less or not, depended on who it was who measured them. First of all, she was the richest heiress in the town; secondly, if there were the slightest sign of rain, snow, or cold wind, a servant drove up to fetch her home, and then it was a question who should drive home with her.

She had almost always something good with her; her pocket-money was of that description that the more she spent, the more she had; the resources of her dainty little purse were incredible in this respect. She got money from her mother, from her father, from two unmarried uncles. As well as this she was pretty, discreet, attentive; no one had ever known her to use a hasty word, or be rough, even at the gymnasium; she was always very polite and a little subdued. In her eyes, to forget yourself was the worst of crimes. She had lived, so to say, wrapped up in cotton wool, and one felt this whenever one approached her. We know her already; she is Emilie Engel.

She was not specially gifted, but was industrious; she really worked hard when there was anything on foot. Every one liked her, several paid court to her, one or two absolutely raved about her.

Tinka Hansen belonged to none of these groups; if ever she devoted herself to any one it would be to her opposite; quiet, dutiful Milla was too like herself.

## THE STAFF

As Nora first attached herself to Tinka, and through Tinka to others, Milla was offended. When Nora turned to her it was too late ; there was plenty of politeness and willingness to oblige, but not a word for her singing, not a smile for her Christiania witticisms ; never so much as a glance when the whole class, during one of her lively descriptions, hung admiringly on her words.

Nora could not endure this indifference ; she condescended to pay court to her in all those ways which are only known to a young girl. In vain. At last they divided into parties. Nora considered Milla insignificant, egotistic, cold, prim, missish ; Milla considered Nora—no, Milla did not consider Nora anything, she let her friends talk and she listened. Nora's jaunty Christiania style of manner and speech were unbecoming, her caprices could not be endured by any one who respected herself ; her accomplishments were all superficial, she was characterless ; besides, it was considered that some of her remarks showed a want of religion, and Milla's party was religious.

Milla had been confirmed at Easter. The increasing weakness of Fru Engel had given a tone of enthusiasm to her religious thoughts and to the aspect of her mind ; she found comfort through it, and need for it, and she endeavoured to lead her daughter in the same direction.

At the time of her confirmation Milla found a confidant in the niece of the Frökener Jensens, little Anna Rogne, who was extremely religious ; she was two years her elder, but she was small

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

and delicate ; indeed, on more than one occasion her life had been despaired of. Anna had more religious knowledge than most grown people, and she enraptured Karl Vangen at the confirmation classes. Milla, whom she had imbued with some of her enthusiasm, had no objection to share in it to a slight degree. As soon as little Anna observed this reflection of her own thoughts, she rejoiced from the bottom of her heart, and declared Milla to be "spiritually minded." She was astonished that they had not discovered each other before.

Then came the time when Milla's mother was given up by the doctors. Little Anna's energy was more than natural ; she watched beside the sick-bed with her friend, she read, she sang, she prayed ; for Fru Engel's life must and should be saved ; the doctor could not save her, but prayer could—how confident she was, how enraptured ! And then when Fru Engel died notwithstanding, she would literally have rejoiced to have given her life for Milla ; it was so beautiful to her to see the rich heiress, surrounded with all the comforts of life, pleading on her knees to Jesus ; and now, when the prayers had not availed, she still trusted—nay, in the midst of her sorrow she thanked God with her, entirely submissive to His will. Little Anna felt from the bottom of her heart that a bond had been twined between them which death alone could sever.

Milla returned to school three weeks later than the others ; she took a place next to Anna Rogne. They drove up together nearly every day, and

## THE STAFF

they returned together in the carriage, for Milla was still living in the country, and Anna was almost always with her.

Milla's return made a stir. Her mourning suited her to perfection; her pale face and subdued manner accorded with it like dull silver work on velvet. The quiet gentleness with which she accepted everything, even Nora's eager worship, gained her much considerate kindness.

The first day or two seemed devoted to expressing sympathy with Milla.

But there was a new face among them, a new figure there on the form in front of her, a new voice, fresh ways—and what was not less important to Milla—a new dress. Especially when the new hat and mantle were added to it, a more daring choice of colours was presented, a more delicate cut, richer details, than she had ever seen before. She knew who the new-comer was—the daughter of the chief custom-house officer Holm, from Bergen, the one with the brown face, large dark eyes, and curly white hair: a curiously shy man, who drank, drank so that it was only through forbearance that he retained his post; he had ten children!

Tora was the eldest, and had been brought up, from her twelfth year, partly in England, partly in France, by an uncle who had been a shipbroker, first in the one country, then in the other; he had just died, leaving his adopted daughter a small annuity. Milla knew all this. Anna had also incidentally observed that Tora Holm was pretty.

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

But this was not the right word. Where were Anna's eyes? Tora was a beauty, and her beauty was singular and "foreign." Anna had used her ears as little as her eyes, for there was but one opinion about it.

Milla did nothing the whole of the first day but look at Tora, who, although her back was turned towards her, could not keep quiet, but twisted and turned as though she could feel the other's eyes on her neck. The more restless Tora became, the more calmly Milla studied her. At home, in the sitting-room, stood a head of the young Augustus in marble; it had been Milla's admiration from childhood. And now, there it was, on a girl's body, on the bench before her, moving in brightness and colour.

The brow was exactly the same, the whole shape of the head, broad above; the curve of the cheeks and chin, the arch of the eyebrows the same, all the same! The eyes were different and more full of life, for those of the Augustus gave the impression of dulness, or at least heaviness. These sparkled incessantly in changing shades of blue-grey, under long dark eyelashes. The mouth was full and curved, the hair black-brown, or brown-black, as the light fell upon it. The complexion was a sort of pale olive. Milla had no words to express it; it was a combination she had never seen before. There was a large, very large birth-mark on her cheek, perhaps it was that which disturbed her, for she never turned that cheek when she looked round at Milla. Her figure was developed, very strong and statuesque.

## THE STAFF

Apparently she was a little over sixteen. She did not look well at the moment, she was flushed and had dark lines under her eyes ; the perspiration stood on her face.

Her whole appearance was striking ; Milla looked at her without a trace of envy. What taste this new girl had, beyond anything she had ever seen ; how much she must know !

Every now and then Milla looked at her next neighbour. Anna sat there, spare and angular ; her thin, blue, and inordinately long fingers especially occupied Milla to-day. What a contrast !

Should she speak to the new-comer, be friendly to her ? Perhaps it would be a little forward. From the moment that she saw her during the next "recreation," walking arm in arm with Nora, this idea was dropped as a matter of course.

During the three weeks which preceded Milla's return, a good deal had happened ; a revolution had silently begun which was not yet at an end.

Tora Holm made her appearance in the school rather untowardly. She arrived late, met no one in the hall, and did not know where to go ; every one was assembled in the "laboratory" for morning prayers. At that moment Karl Vangen, who had been detained at the bedside of a sick person, rushed in and almost overturned her ; then became as confused as only a young clergyman can, mistook her for the new teacher, and bewildered himself and her by his embarrassment. It was therefore some little time before she, in her Bergen sing-song, could explain who she was,

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

and when he heard it, and it flashed into his mind that she was in trouble for her uncle's death and had returned to an unhappy home, he broke out, "We will all be so kind to you here; so"—he seized her hand—"welcome, welcome!" Before he could say more she began to cry. She was nervous and timid, everything was new and strange. He could think of nothing else to do than to open the door and call out "Mother."

And out came Fru Rendalen with her spectacles awry, and asked rather shortly (for Fru Rendalen was particular, and this should not have happened), "What is it, Karl?"

"Here is Fröken Holm, custom-house officer Holm's daughter, mother."

"Very well, let her come in," answered Fru Rendalen, opening the door wide. "How do you do?" she said, as she stood in the doorway and held out her hand to Tora in the half-lighted hall. There was far too much of a command in her tone for Tora not to advance. Fru Rendalen then saw that she had come crying to school like a little thing of five years old. She was surprised; she showed her a place, which Tora shyly took, and asked one of the teachers to help her off with her hat and cloak, which the little donkey had kept on—thought Fru Rendalen to herself.

They sang a hymn and Karl spoke about meeting—whenever one discovers anything good in a person, one meets God—that was his subject.

At the moment Tora was only conscious of the sound of a powerful voice, she was tormented by the remembrance of her unlucky entrance and the



## THE STAFF

impression it had made ; first and foremost upon Fru Rendalen, but also on the others ; she had seen that plainly. She could not keep quiet ; she turned away when any one looked at her, turned this way and that as though she wished both to be looked at and not to be looked at. If any one spoke to her, which happened after a while, she coloured, and answered something which she at once contradicted. This went on during the first three days. She knew neither Norwegian geography nor Norwegian history—indeed, she did not know a single thing except English and French, and coloured up when this was discovered ; but when it was also discovered that she spoke both these languages fluently, she coloured up just as much. She would not do gymnastics on any consideration—at last she said she had no dress. She made herself one which was a masterpiece of coquetry ; but this she denied, and declared it to be purely and simply ugly. She could not go on long with the gymnastics, strongly built as she was, but gave in completely and began to cry. Miss Hall, who superintended the gymnastics and introduced special exercises for some of the girls, led her towards the window and looked at her. Miss Hall had partly forgotten her Norse, and did not remember at the moment that Tora spoke English ; she tried to find a word while she examined her. Tora misunderstood this and ran away from her, put on her things and went straight home, refusing to return to school. It required no little trouble before she could be brought back, not only to

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

school but as a boarder; she needed better food than she got at home, for she was beginning in *chlorosis*; this was the word that Miss Hall could not remember. Tora now shared Miss Hall's room; she was the first, though afterwards one of the pupils always did so.

Little by little the new-comer forgot herself so far as to be able to sit still, but never if any one looked at her steadily, or talked about her. She must feel it in her back, her companions said. They tried experiments, and laughed when she really did by degrees become uneasy, and at last turned round and looked at them.

Nora had been a boarder during the past year, and was often up at the school. She did not speak to Tora except just in passing, but one Sunday Tora asked her if she might do her hair for her. This made as much stir among the boarders as though she had offered Nora some new hair. Word was sent from room to room; they all collected, big ones and little ones, to see Nora with new hair. They stood there, they leaned over one another, while the great work went on.

For what was done was nothing less; laughter soon changed to astonishment, to admiration, to applause.

One day, when Nora's hair was untidy, Tora had suddenly noticed that this was becoming to her. It suited the large, wide-open eyes, by far the most striking part of her little face. She had next to no forehead, very small cheeks, a little mouth with cherry lips, and a rather large nose,

## THE STAFF

a real family nose ; but it only seemed to set off the eyes, so that it was the eyes all the same—nothing but eyes. Now what was wanted was some way of raising the hair, so that it should help the eyes as well. Tora had seen a great deal, and often had “inspirations,” but never as yet in hair-dressing. She had one now. Naturally she began by letting it all down and combing it out, then took the front hair and made it into two large rolls, one on each side, lightly twisted ; it was very little in itself, and not at all striking, but the effect in this case was amazing. When her eyes grew large, the hair looked as though it would spread its wings and fly away, sometimes almost as though it flickered—the hair was naturally a little wavy.

Up to this time Nora had never been thought pretty, there were other qualities in her which one noticed ; but now Rendalen himself, who very rarely looked closely at any one, stopped short as he was reading aloud, when, chancing to raise his eyes, he caught sight of Nora ; the whole class knew what he thought. The one who was least concerned was perhaps Nora herself ; now she had settled about her hair, and she need not think anything more about it ; but when Tora Holm, as their friendship increased, began to rave about her talents, and, with her tendency towards exaggeration, declared that Nora was “all soul,” that her music “absolutely carried one away,” and that her chance remarks always “hit the right nail on the head,” that really was something ! She longed for more with insatiable

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

voracity, and cultivated the friendship. Tora Holm constantly made discoveries; the most important one was that Nora was always right, even if she had been capricious towards others, hasty—nay, even when she had had a slight fit of untruthfulness, Nora was right, quite right—at the bottom.

It now struck Nora that Tora Holm was the first person who had ever thoroughly understood her: to think that a stranger who looked at her with fresh impartial eyes should have discovered this at once! The more they saw of each other, the more gifted they thought each other. Tora's talent for telling stories was the "greatest" Nora had "ever known;" she gathered all her set round her to listen, and the story-telling began. Fairy tales and romances by turns—what had not Tora read, what did she not remember? The girls would listen over and over again to the "Thousand and One Nights" (not the condensed edition, but the full one) as though they were little children. As well as this, they liked pictures of real life which did not go beyond their comprehension, though they preferred that the lovers (and by inference also themselves) should be noble and unhappy. These girls of fifteen, sixteen, and seventeen (Tora herself was nearly seventeen), for various reasons had, outside their school subjects, read only by stealth, with the results which naturally follow. The books which Rendalen had read to them had greatly widened their horizon and increased their desire to know more, so that Tora was doubly welcome.

## THE STAFF

But between the story-telling times Nora wished to have her to herself, really to possess her; Nora-Tora, Tora-Nora, wove themselves together, no one else could approach them. Nora announced this openly; they two preferred being by themselves.

Every one knew Nora, and understood that in a few days it would be over; they only laughed, but there was one who did not laugh.

Tinka Hansen could not endure faithlessness; she had taken Nora to task on one or two occasions and warned her. This time she was silent, and allowed the penalty to consist in punctiliously respecting their wish to remain apart. Nora could never get her to come with her.

Very soon Nora began to feel lonely among all these delightful Oriental palaces; she did not realise this till she discovered that without Tinka she did not feel free to do as she liked; without her she dared not always listen. Tora's romances were often very "French." For more than a year Nora had been used to the limits which Tinka imposed. She was not sure if she were now inside or outside them, and an uneasy conscience was the result. Tora had to suffer for this; Nora did not know what they ought to do; she peremptorily cut short a story which had been begun, ordered another, but stopped that as well; made promises and did not keep them, and felt bored. And it was just at the beginning of this period that Milla returned to school.

One Thursday evening, in Fru Rendalen's room, Tomas was going to read a new play to

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

them. Tora Holm, who chanced to be near Milla, looked at her new black dress, which was a different one from that she wore in the school-room. Without touching the dress she said, showing with her fingers what she meant, the "trimming ought to have gone so, not so, and had better have been narrower." She did not wait for an answer, but walked farther on and sat down.

The day after, before morning prayers began, Milla came up to her and thanked her; she had tried it, and found that Tora was right. There was no time for more, but during the first "recreation" they involuntarily sought each other out. "How could you see that at once?" asked Milla.

"I tried it the other day on a doll," answered Tora.

"On a doll?" asked Milla with a slight blush. Tora felt that she ought not to have let this out; she was always doubtful about what she ought to do. What a delicate instinct Milla Engel must have, to blush on her account!

"So you dress dolls, do you?" said Milla, smiling, as she passed her the next day. Tora protested; it really was not clear what she protested, whether it were that she had one or two dolls, or that it was her sisters who had them, or that even married women often have dolls, so that there could be nothing odd in that, or else that she quite saw how unbecoming it was, since every age ought to suit with its . . . . She said all this, and a great deal more, in her Bergen sing-song, and Milla smiled. "Won't you come in and see

## THE STAFF

me this afternoon? We are back from the country now."

Tora had not refused before Milla had said good-bye, but afterwards she felt dreadfully embarrassed about it. Nevertheless at six o'clock she was there.

Tora had a great wish to get up in the world—she would not be chained to a home such as hers was, to such a fate as threatened her.

Consul Engel's house was almost the only one in the town where the door was kept closed all day. When one rang, either a man-servant or a maid opened the door, and one entered a house where there was Brussels carpet in the passages and on the stairs, as well as in the rooms, and where, to begin with, one found oneself between two mirrors where one could see oneself from head to foot.

Tora was shown upstairs. "Fröken Engel's" room was there. She was heartily welcomed. The rooms were those which Fru Engel had occupied during the last years of her life; she had very rarely left them.

She had died here, and it was for that reason that the family had gone so late into the country this year, and had only just returned to the house.

Every comfort which a room can possess was there; the chairs and couches were all as soft as the cushions of an invalid, you seemed to sink into them; they were upholstered in moss-green silk, and the curtains and portières were of the same material and colour, the walls were a dark

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

indefinite colour. There was an old-fashioned rosewood cabinet in inlaid work, with a number of small pigeon-holes and receptacles in it. Tora never wearied of looking at it. An Erard piano with carved heads and emblems, a bookcase in the same style. Pictures, especially landscapes, which made one long for the evening sun, with its hazy light and almost sultry heat.

Tora went from one to another ; she looked at every single thing as though it were a person with whom she wished to make friends. From there she went to the bedroom, and admired the soft carpet into which her feet sank, the little *chaise-longue* in one corner, the bed with its rich hangings, the variety and elegance of the toilette apparatus. Milla's pleasure at seeing her was expressed in the one remark that she had never before taken any one up into her mother's rooms.

There was only one piece of furniture which did not please Tora ; at last she could no longer contain herself, it assorted so ill with its surroundings. "What is there in that press, dear ? Why is it here ?" Milla replied, smiling, that it was very incongruous, she knew ; it had not been there before—in fact, it was her own ; she had had it ever since she was a child.

"But can't it stand in another place ?"

"No, not very well."

There was something of reserve in this answer, she could not inquire further. As Tora was leaving Milla asked her to come again soon, but she had better let her know beforehand, so that they might be alone — that would be the



## THE STAFF

pleasantest. Tora understood that this was meant for Anna Rogne, but that was no affair of hers.

It so chanced that the next time she sat telling stories in the twilight to Nora and her friends, who for convenience had settled themselves on the floor on some carpets and eider-downs, she let fall the remark, that "Of all the people I know, the one who is most like Gulnare is Milla Engel." This, to her audience, was much like saying before the king that he was not the wisest man in the kingdom. Nora was amazed, her friends almost broke out into open anger. Tora felt that she had done a foolish thing; she tried to explain herself by ascribing that "passive" beauty to Milla which was here implied. The expressions active and passive were at that time war cries in the senior class; there were "active" people and "passive" people, "active" eyes and "passive" eyes, "active" and "passive" colours.

"But, good gracious," said one of the girls, "Milla has not dark hair; she is fair."

"So is Nora," answered the thoughtless Tora.

"I certainly have no wish to be a passive beauty, or an Eastern princess," answered Nora angrily. "No, I did not mean that at all, I only meant——" she stopped short, for she really did not know why she had said it.

"That was sheer nonsense," the others declared, and pressed Tora so hard that she declared, with tears in her eyes, that Milla was the most refined and the prettiest girl in the school. She

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

(Tora) was only too happy to know any one who was so considerate, so full of tact ; it was more than could be said of every one.

This was too much. Gina Krog herself, who was always forbearing, did not now scruple to announce that she had known for two days, but had not wished to tell, that Tora went to see Milla, and that they were bosom friends. There was a dead silence. Soon afterwards Nora left, and the others dispersed. Tora tried to explain, but they would not listen to her.

None of the boarders belonged to Milla's party ; not a girl there had set her foot inside Milla Engel's door—for the reason that they had never been asked.

However much Tora tossed about and turned herself and her pillow that night, she could not sleep ; it vexed and hurt her that she could not be friends with one without losing the friendship of the other. Now the whole school would look on her as a faithless wretch. Heaven knew that she was not, yet she might be sent to Coventry for it, it might always be remembered against her. It was a question of the future for her. She had been so tossed about, she felt so insecure ; she was always stretching out her arms for something solid to cling to, which as constantly eluded her grasp. She cried bitterly ; she liked them both so much, each in her own way, though they were so different. Why should she not if she liked ? What could she do ? She did not wish to sacrifice either of them.

The next day was Sunday ; she had to go to

## THE STAFF

church, but she would not wait for the others, who were going as well—so she went straight off to Milla. Milla was dressed for church; they met in the hall, but she was surprised when Tora asked if she might speak to her. She took her into her room and locked the door. Tora began to cry and told her everything exactly as it had happened; she did not conceal that she was fond of them both and why she was so, nor how lonely she felt, and what an effect this might have on her future. Nora had so much influence both among the boarders and the day girls.

In the midst of the story, just as Tora had paused for a moment to cry, Milla heard some one at the door; there was a knock, she opened it just wide enough to step through; in a little time she returned and said that she and Anna Rogne had made an engagement to go to church together, but that she had excused herself on the score of a headache; it was certainly the second Sunday that she had done so, but it could not be helped. Milla was sorry for Tora; she really was fond of her, it showed itself now. She promised not to take anything in bad part which Tora might devise, so as to keep on good terms with Nora and her numerous friends. Milla really was very sweet.

Tora had only time to put her arms round her and kiss her for this, for she must show herself in church. But might she come again in the afternoon? She was very much consoled, but she longed for more; she was so frightened, she

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

must manage to talk everything over with her. Milla asked her to come again as early as ever she could.

Tora came again after coffee ; as soon as she had locked the door, Milla whispered, as she put her arm round Tora's neck, that now she was going to give her a treat, she felt certain that it would please her. To no one, absolutely to no one, had she shown what Tora was going to see. The press there——

“ The press, well—— ? ”

“ Once it held my dolls.”

“ Your dolls ! ”

“ Every one knows that it does not now,” said Milla ; as she spoke she flung it open. The large double doors, both the upper and lower ones, flew back together, and the girls could see four storeys of a house ; the bottom one a complete and marvellously dainty kitchen, scullery, and dining-room, above a drawing-room, a large elegant apartment with the most lovely furniture upholstered in silk, a black rosewood table, fireplace, looking-glass, clock. On the third storey a bedroom, with the sweetest little beds—real actual beds—and a wash-hand stand, where everything was to be found, down to the most minute details. On the fourth storey was the wardrobe, a magnificent doll's wardrobe. There were changes in silk, velvet, *moiré antique*, in different colours ; a whole collection of materials which had not yet been made up ; scraps of every description evidently collected with diligence and care during many years. All linen, even stockings, and other

## THE STAFF

underclothing, all in duplicate, as well as hats, mantles, ornaments, belts.

Tora shrieked; she was down on her knees and up on tiptoe; she did not at first lay a finger on them, but devoured them with her eyes, unable to take in the whole—it could not be grasped all at once; there was too much, too great a variety, it was too wonderfully minute. She had not even counted the dolls yet. “One, two, three, four—five—six! seven!! eight!!!”

She had begun softly, but her voice rose at every number, so that Milla hastened to say, “Twelve, twelve, there are twelve.”

“Twelve! actually twelve! Oh dear! oh dear! Have you kept all the dolls you have ever had in your life, never spoilt a single one?”

Well, yes she had, but never one since she was seven.

“Wait a minute.” And solemnly, as though she were afraid they might disappear, Tora carefully put in her hand and took up the very, very sweetest doll in light red silk, with shoes and hat of the same colour, a dark red parasol, and a little fan stuck into her belt; her underclothes were made like a real person’s, with lace and embroidery, a pocket in her dress with a pocket-handkerchief in it, and elegant French gloves which fitted her hands; as well a little brooch shaped like a forget-me-not, and bracelets and watch in the same style. Tora stood dumb with admiration, while she turned the doll round, inspected the cut and make of the dress, the underclothes; held it away from her, then close

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

to her. At that moment there was a knock at the door. Some one had come right upstairs without the preoccupied girls having heard the least sound. They were startled. Milla held up her finger. She turned red and white. Of course it was Anna. But Anna had never seen the dolls, she would not understand.

There were, she explained later, two more dolls in mourning, but Anna had been with her so much lately that she had not been able to dress many of them, otherwise her plan had been to have them all in mourning, that would have been charming. Another knock, low and hesitating. They held their breaths; Milla was quite unnerved. They heard her go; they listened so intently that they could hear her step on the stairs. It was a most unlucky chance. Milla had given orders that if any one besides Tora came they were to say that she had gone out for a walk on account of her headache. But the maid who had received the order, Milla's own maid, could not have answered the door, although it was her time for doing so. What should Milla do? But from this consideration she was swept away by a whirlwind.

Nora lay on the bed in Tinka Hansen's room; a little wainscoted, blue-painted attic in shoemaker Hansen's new house in the market-place. As well as the bed there was an open bookshelf painted brown, one or two chairs, a large washstand intended for two, but for which no other place could be found; a high short sofa on which

## THE STAFF

Tinka now sat, looking across at the bed, her right arm resting on her little desk which stood on the table before her.

Nora lay sobbing loudly, and Tinka sat calmly by and looked at her; Nora knew now what faithlessness was, how it tasted to be deserted for the sake of another.

But it was more than being forsaken—she was abandoned, deposed, made nothing of. Tora had lifted her up to the skies; she was “all mind,” “could not make a mistake.” And now this very Tora had dropped her—for Milla Engel! The world was nothing but lies and delusions. “Oh dear! Tinka, why cannot you be kind to me? You do not know how unhappy I am.” But Tinka was silent. “I cannot do without you, Tinka—no, I cannot. I have discovered since this morning that I made nothing but mistakes. I have no stability—no, not a bit.”

“No, that is it,” said Tinka soothingly.

“Not a bit; oh dear, what shall I do? Won’t you talk to me?” She cried dreadfully now.

“You only care for adoration, Nora.”

“Not ‘only,’ Tinka; don’t say ‘only.’”

“No, no; but you are never happy unless you are adored, and one tires of that.”

“What shall I do, Tinka? Goodness knows I am tired of it myself. Ah, you do not believe it, but it’s true, especially now since Milla is adored as well. Ugh! it is disgusting to think of.”

“That is merely because it is Milla, and not you.”

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

"No indeed, Tinka," and she raised herself on her elbow. "Tora has given me so much of it that I am tired of it; yes, I am; and to think that she is with Milla now." She flung herself down again and cried with anger and vexation. She raised herself again suddenly: "But I must get rid of all this; it is disgusting; I despise myself; you do not know what I have been thinking since this morning. Help me, Tinka; you are the only one of them all who speaks the truth to me."

Tinka was unmoved: Nora flung herself down again, turned away and cried.

"I cannot understand," said Tinka at length, "that you who rave so for——"

"Do not use that word"—Nora interrupted her while she made a gesture with her hand behind her—"it has become loathsome now that Milla does it too. Milla 'raves.' Can you imagine anything so——?"

"Well, well, I will not say 'rave.'"

"No, don't."

"Very well, I will say 'interest yourself'—you who interest yourself so much in all that is just and great, and who are also so brave, for you would cheerfully die for what you think right——"

"Yes, I could, Tinka; I believe I could do that; ah, how nice it is to hear something good again, and especially from you; I feel quite astray."

"Yes, but now I am coming to what I want to say—do you understand? Is it not a shame that



## THE STAFF

any one so excellent should all the same be such a peacock ? ”

“ A peacock, Tinka ? ”

“ Yes, a peacock ; you are just like a peacock ! ”

“ Am I ? I think you are——”

“ It was not I who said so.”

“ I thought as much.”

“ It was Tora who said so.”

“ Tora ! the ungrateful——”

“ Yes, but Tora is right ; you are dreadfully like a peacock, Nora ; that thin little face of yours, and then you are so slender.”

• “ Come, I say, Tinka.”

“ Yes, it's true. All we friends agree as to that. We are all to be the eyes in your tail. Yes, that is it.”

Nora threw herself down and howled, with her head and hands in the eider-down quilt.

“ Yes, of course you have offended Tora—you offend every one. You are so capricious, you are so spoilt.”

“ Yes, that is what I am ! ” came from the eider-down.

“ That is what you are. Frederik says so as well.”

“ What does Frederik say ? ”

Nora raised her red face quickly up from the eider-down. Frederik was an authority.

“ I will read it to you,” answered the other, opening the desk, and taking out a letter of at least five sheets.

“ He writes,” she said, as she turned to the

### THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

fourth side of the fourth sheet, with the same calm deliberation with which she had opened the desk, looked for the letter, closed the desk again, and now read: "You must not be too severe with her either, for if that were her real nature, she would behave differently, and understand how to retain her worshippers. As it is, she is only a spoilt child, who has never done anything without being praised for it, and has besides become so capricious that she is tired to-day of those who praised her yesterday."

"Oh dear! how true that is, Tinka."

"But perhaps she will weary of caprice as well, for she certainly desires something more than that. I was impressed by that in the summer. But you must help her, Tinka."

"Yes, you must."

Nora had raised herself, and now sat on the edge of the bed. She had folded her hands, and looked at Tinka. "You must always be with me. I am not content with myself, when you are not with me. Oh, Tinka! I will never, never, never be like that again. If you see the slightest sign of it, you must take me to task for it. You know I do want to be something more than this. I want to be remarkable. Ah! don't laugh; in reality I have no wish to sing and make fun for the others, and be flattered and flattered; but it came so, I can't understand why. I don't want it; I wish to be able to do something, to take up something with an object. *Yes, that is what I want.* Sometimes I believe I must go off to the wars, or die with the Nihilists in Russia. Yes, I

## THE STAFF

do believe it. Or else travel about and lecture ; be hissed down and wounded. Yes, I could. I don't know why it should be, but I long for it. I don't say it to boast, Tinka, I only say it because I feel it so. Believe me, I do feel it in that way. If I fail, it will be because it is nothing but wishing ; perhaps I am incapable of it. Well, all the same I have the wish. I have no wish for the sort of thing I do now, and for which I am praised. I have such an unconquerably strong, strong, strong longing."

She raised herself, her eyes sparkled through her tears ; her hair stood on end, she had dishevelled it with her long arms whilst she was crying. She threw herself down again. Tinka could not resist all the pleasant remembrances which Nora had awakened. She walked across and bent her broad full figure over her. And there they sat for some time together, talking that endearing nonsense which is proper to the happiness of reconciliation. Tinka did not forget all that she had treasured in her memory for Nora's benefit, but the sting of it was gone. Nora's lively answers made it all appear stupid, and at last she was ready to laugh at what a little time before had seemed something very serious, immensely important.

In the midst of this, some one rushed up the stairs, step by step, up the first flight, like the beat of a drum. Then up the second, then the third, across to the attic, in the same wild unflagging whirl. There was only one who ever came in that fashion, but it could not very well

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

be she. The door was not locked ; there was no knock ; it was pushed open. Yes, it was Tora ! Good heavens !

The amazement, vexation, dignity of the two girls ! It could not have been done better at Court, Tinka's perfect unconsciousness that there could be such a person as Tora Holm in the world, or Nora's noble and spiritual, "Don't disturb me," without a word spoken. It was splendid ! Never did so fine a representation more utterly break down. Tora was beaming with delight, victory, and rejoicing. She talked about *twelve* dolls, some of which were as big as an ordinary child ; of—she really believed—*fifty* dolls' dresses of different sorts, *moiré antique*, silk, and velvet, besides morning dresses, embroidered skirts and drawers, silk stockings, gloves and parasols ; of beds and curtains ; of a wash-hand stand, with all belonging to it, down to the most minute details ; of everything from the kitchen to the drawing-room, and the drawing-room furniture ; of a splendid plan about the dolls, who were all to go to a Court Ball on the King's birthday ; about Milla, who was a hundred thousand times better than they dreamed of, who did not object, nay wished, that they should both come up with her and see it all now, at once, and help about the Court Ball—of course as the deepest of secrets. Yes, it was true ; on her word of honour it was true. She told them how it had all happened ; about Milla's room, what it was like, and that she had been there a number of times without hearing a word about the dolls. But to-day

## THE STAFF

Milla had shown them to her, merely out of the goodness of her heart to comfort her. Now she wanted to show them to the others, if it could be managed, and all four be friends from this time forward.

Tora had proposed it; Milla had been startled, but she had come round, and at last thought it a capital plan. Milla was so good, and they must be so too; no hesitation—they must. Why should there be two parties? Milla had her ways, Nora hers.

They had never really done each other any harm, not the least bit; if they would only try to grasp the fact: "we can talk more about it as we go."

The two looked at each other, but Tora gave them no breathing time. "We must tell them at home that we are going to stay to tea, for that was what was meant. It would never do to refuse an invitation, a formal invitation, to the Engels."

Tora was a perfect whirlwind, carrying all before her, and the storm of excitement had brought fire to her eyes, her movements—she seemed to sparkle. She took possession of them.

Not long afterwards they all four stood before the press; the introduction, the embarrassment from the change of circumstances, apologies, counter-apologies, occupied the first few minutes; Tora took hold of Milla and pushed her gently forward to the front of the press.

"Open! open!—we can talk afterwards—open!" Milla herself felt that here action was better than words, and opened the door.

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

The cry of delight which was given by the newcomers fully rewarded her.

There was an amount of industry, order, loyalty, and sense of beauty in this little collection which she was aware of herself, and which made it dear to her heart. It was her treasure, never seen by many people, and for the last two or three years only by herself; there was therefore a special charm of secrecy in it; it would be enjoyed when some day it was opened before the astonished eyes of others. And now, how it was enjoyed!

Each one found a special pleasure in it. Tinka looked upon the dolls as so many little children, she talked baby talk to them: "Doodnes dacious" for "Goodness gracious," and "tweet" for "sweet." She began to undress one for the pleasure of dressing it again.

Tora delighted in the stuffs, felt each one, held them up against the light, laid them one against the other. There was a special piece of brocade which she now saw for the first time (Milla looked it out for her), which absolutely enraptured her; it suggested plan upon plan, she talked without a pause. Nora regarded the press as a collection of works of art. Milla became a new person in her eyes. It was evident what she thought of her now, one saw it in Milla's slightly heightened colour.

They treated each other the whole evening with a distinction which the others considered as only natural.

They were soon all sitting round the table with the dolls shared among them; the materials and everything which could be of use for this great

## THE STAFF

object, a Court Ball, lay scattered before them, and eight eyes and forty fingers rummaged among them. They could not agree; Tora wished to have a costume ball, her endless chatter filled the air with fancies and varying colours, a perfect whirl of figures of damsels and *rococo* dames with ribbons, feathers, and hats. Milla preferred the present day, the fashion plates, especially some quite new ones.

Nora was sometimes on one side, sometimes on the other, according as some special thing took her fancy. Tinka opposed the idea; they could each one dress her doll according to her own fancy. Nora and Tora rebelled against this; there ought to be some style in it. Milla dealt with the proposal with more deliberation, but was against it. Nora quickly grew impatient at this, and then, by a sleight of hand which only girls understand, this discussion turned into a dispute about—Tomas Rendalen and Karl Vangen! Not between Tinka and the others, but Tora against Nora and Tinka. Tora being herself nervous, could not endure Rendalen's nervousness. It was either this, or that she was inclined to be in opposition; otherwise it cannot be explained how it was that from the first day she had been unable to get on with Rendalen. A speaking resemblance between a red-spotted stuff and Rendalen's hands had started the dispute. Nora had hastily answered that his hands were clever, really speaking hands; Vangen's, on the contrary, were "big and stupid, as broad at one end as the other."

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

When there are only two masculine teachers in a girls' school, the pupils very rarely praise both—one must be censured when the other is applauded ; and at school it was generally honest Karl Vangen who was used as a foil whenever any one felt inclined to become enthusiastic over the intellectual Rendalen.

But on this point Tora was in opposition from the moment when Karl Vangen had grasped her hand in warm welcome, and had beamed down at her with his kind eyes, and besides had made their meeting the text of his address that day—since then she had been fond of him. And the more awkward and simple he was, the more she liked him—she fought for him until the others were forced to respect her.

This time it began very mildly ; they merely taunted her with Karl Vangen's "thick head," his wide mouth, his long fingers, long legs and big feet ; and she replied with allusions to Rendalen's red hair, screwed-up eyes, his feminine preciseness, his scented handkerchief ; but it soon became more serious. Tora's quick wit cited instances of Rendalen's uncontrolled impetuosity, and what mistakes he made in consequence. Instances of his uneven temper—how sometimes he rushed up and down the class without speaking, without hearing, without seeing ; at other times he was nothing but life, absolutely given up to fun—far too much so. The others considered that this was unjust, because if this were mentioned by itself, no one would have the least idea of Rendalen, who was, for all that, the best



## THE STAFF

and cleverest teacher in the world. Tinka had a capricious talent for mimicry and not the slightest leaning towards piety, so that Karl Vangen very easily appeared to her in a ludicrous light ; she now began to preach, or rather to bleat, like him, with eyes gazing fixedly heavenwards. Nora laughed violently, Tora cried, Milla could not prevent herself from laughing, but all the same, she now took Karl Vangen's part ; she quietly remarked that she thought him " delightful " ; she did not mention Rendalen. As Milla was the hostess and Nora and Tinka at her house for the first time, they said no more ; but Tora would not give in ; she now seriously began to sing Karl Vangen's praises. In order not to answer and admit that there might be some truth in it, Nora walked away humming and looked out of the window. " Good gracious ! why, there goes Anna Rogne," she said.

" Has she been here ? " asked Milla, turning pale ; she got up and came towards the window. Yes, certainly she saw Anna hurrying away, she must be much disturbed ; she herself, with as much speed as was becoming, hastened out of the door and down the stairs. Some time elapsed before she returned. She was silent and really upset ; Anna had been right upstairs and therefore outside their door. There was general astonishment. Milla told them what had happened that morning, and how innocent she really was in the matter. Tora at once took it upon herself, and was terribly unhappy.

" No, the blame is mine alone," said Milla.

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

What should she do? She had ordered the carriage.

No one answered, but they looked involuntarily at Tinka.

"Yes," said Tinka, "we will all go together to fetch Anna and explain to her how it happened." Nora and Tora agreed at once that that was the only right thing to do. Milla, too, admitted that this would be best, but she had never said anything to Anna about the dolls; Anna did not care for such things, and now it could not very well be explained to her without offence. Nora and Tora were sensible of this; it would not do.

Tinka held to her opinion; she would gladly undertake it by herself.

No; if any one were to do so it should be Milla.

This put the idea into Milla's head to write. Simply say to Anna that the others were here, would she not come too? She sent the carriage. Yes, the others thought that would do.

"Go yourself!" said Tinka.

"No, I am not so discourteous as that to my guests," laughed Milla. She sat down to write.

The others were quiet for a time; at last Nora broke in with, "Tinka is certainly right; go yourself, we can easily go out just for that time."

"No," answered Milla, looking up from her letter; "Anna need not know that we saw her. Then it would be the most natural thing in the world for me to send a message to her when you are here." The others could not contradict this. She finished off the note and hurried down with

## THE STAFF

it ; as she came up again they heard the carriage drive out of the gate, at the side of the house. Milla smiled ; " I said I would explain another time why you had come. I told Hans to be quick and to drive a little way round so as not to pass Anna ; perhaps the carriage will be there before she is." It was evident that she was pleased at having proved equal to a difficult occasion.

They resumed their discussion on the dolls' festival ; but before the carriage returned with Anna, the dolls and their things must be back in the press.

Suddenly Nora broke out : " If we are not to mention the dolls to Anna, why in the world could we not have all gone to her together ? "

They looked puzzled at each other for a moment. It was true ! They burst out laughing. What had given them the mad idea that for them all to go together would be to let out the secret of the dolls. They tried to recall the course of their conversation, but could not determine it ; at all events, it showed that they had uneasy consciences. Tinka proposed in good time to put away the dolls, their wardrobe and stuffs, under Milla's superintendence ; but Milla undertook to put the whole thing tidy later on, they could sit quiet while she did so. They all objected to this ; it would be awfully amusing to put them away. And so it was settled.

The carriage returned without Anna—she had a headache. Tora looked at Milla, and Milla at Tora ; this was a final good-bye. It put them all out of tune for a little while, but when they

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

remembered that at all events they could take the dolls out again, the three guests soon consoled themselves.

As soon as they had got to work, the conversation naturally turned upon Anna ; none of the three liked her ; they thought her artificial, *prétentieuse*, as Tora expressed it in rather affected French ; Anna was always trying to take up some special line ; everything she said, or did, must be so dreadfully thorough. But they all agreed that she wrote well ; it was true, for the two things went naturally together.

They then began to make fun of her extreme piety. Milla had said nothing about the first ; as regarded the second, she contented herself by remarking that she had perhaps a little too much of it.

Nora was the first to forsake the table. She could not go on any longer ; she must have a little music, she said. The grand piano was tried. Milla was afraid that it was not quite in tune ; nor was it, but what a tone ! Nora sang, while the others dressed dolls ; then she worried Tinka to join her, but at first Tinka would not leave her blue doll ; at last Milla asked her to do so. They had sung one or two songs when there was a knock at the door. Milla's maid announced that the Consul had arrived ; there was great surprise, he was not expected. Milla hurried down. The others all agreed at once that they must go, it would be dull work having tea with the Consul. Tora especially shrank from it ; her cuffs were not quite clean ; would it do to ask Milla to lend her

## THE STAFF

a pair ? During this discussion the door was opened, in came Milla, quicker than any one believed it possible for her to move. "Father's coming," she whispered, and hurried to the table with the others after her. From there to the press, from the press to the table, from the table to the press ; heads and shoulders were knocked together, toes trodden on, amid smothered cries, laughter, and scolding ; everything was off the table and locked up as the Consul knocked at the door. Nora had pushed Tinka on to the sofa, she herself sat gravely on a chair, Milla and Tora stood by the press. The Consul came in, elegant and smiling as usual. He saw the four girls red with suppressed laughter, or whatever it might be, embarrassed, constrained. "What the deuce is it ?" he thought, and came forward to Nora, the Sheriff's daughter, bowed politely, bade her welcome, and asked after her parents ; then to the others as Milla introduced them, and then back again to Nora ; he asked merrily if he might have the pleasure of taking her downstairs. He had just come from the steamer, and was as hungry as one only can be after a sea voyage.

She took his arm, but he wished the others to go first, which they hesitated to do ; it seemed as though one were waiting for the other. Tinka could not understand why Tora did not move, and when the Consul turned towards her again she came forward, although it was rather embarrassing. Why did not Milla help her ? She stood there too, as though she had taken root. The Consul gave his daughter a little push :

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

"*Avancez, mesdemoiselles.*" She was obliged to come a little forward, and the lower part of a doll become visible ! It lay there, "naked and face downwards," as the song says. Tora tried to cover it up, but the Consul had caught sight of it, and with a "Pardon me, Fröken," he stooped and picked it up. Tora ran, Tinka ran, Milla ran, Nora let go his arm and ran, and the Consul after them with the doll. "What is this—what in the world is this ?"

They all rushed into the dining-room and stood there in a group, convulsed with laughter, as the Consul followed them with the doll in the air like a flag. It was the blue doll which Tinka had undressed for the third time, and was going to put to bed just as the Consul came and everything was hurry-scurry. It must have slipped down and bashfully hidden itself under a skirt at the time the press was closed. Milla and Tora had discovered it at the same moment, and both placed themselves over it.

The Consul sat down with the doll in his arms ; then he laid it down in his table napkin, and after looking at it once or twice he put it on the table with a teacup under its head. Milla snatched it from him.

"Do you really play with dolls ?"

No, indeed ; they had come to consult together about Christmas presents. Milla gave this answer.

"Why should you hide such a harmless thing ?" asked the Consul.

"Because the doll was undressed, of course,"

## THE STAFF

answered his daughter. Nora soon joined in ; she was used to this sort of thing. She also had a father who loved to tease girls.

The other two took but little part, but as against that the Consul kept his eyes on them almost continually. Tinka could quite understand that Tora might attract his attention, but why should she ? She grew uneasy by degrees. Her dress might have come unsewn somewhere near the arm, it happened so to her sometimes ; she looked as well as she could, but failed to discover anything ; she felt as though she had no dress on at all.

The Consul was very merry ; suddenly he turned all his attention to Tora, they had only been a short time at table and she had finished already ! The fact was that the unlucky cuffs worried Tora to such an extent that they ran between her and her wits. The Consul looked at her suddenly ; it was not the birth-mark that he was looking at, for she had been careful to have that side next to Milla ; it was certainly not her face, his looks were directed lower than that. She put down her knife and fork and hid her hands under the table.

"You are not eating, my dear Fröken Holm ; are you not well, missie ? What's amiss with you ? Or is there anything particular you want ? Just say what it is. Milla, give Fröken Holm another cup of tea. No tea either ? A glass of wine ? Come now, just a glass of wine. Your good health, Fröken ! But you won't drink any ? Do you prefer Madeira ? Good gracious, are you

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

blushing about it? Headache? Dear, dear! Perhaps you would like——? Shall Milla help you? Not that either? Just say what you want, my dear. Have you often a headache, Fröken Holm? What, you have not got one? I once knew a girl who would have a headache merely if something were amiss with her cuffs. But, my dear Milla, I do not want to tease Fröken Holm. Is that what it is, Fröken Holm?"

Tora was overcome by a feeling of helplessness which would seize her for even a smaller cause than this, and which always made her cry. She had to leave the table and hasten upstairs.

Milla rose with a dignity which her friends admired, and followed her. When the others joined her, Tora was gone. Milla looked pale, but was completely silent as to what had passed. Nora and Tinka began to put on their things, Milla making no objection. She kissed them and begged them to come again, repeating her invitation down in the hall. It was only when she was upstairs alone, and had locked the door, that she burst into tears. Such a thing would never have happened if her mother had been at table, she could not fill her place; her father had vexed her terribly. Her mother had left her so much too soon. "Oh, mother, mother, mother!" There was a knock at the door. She asked who it was. Her father; of course she had to open, but she went back to the sofa and flung herself crying into the furthest corner. He sat down quietly, and after a few moments he said very gently, almost in a whisper, "Listen, Milla; I am sorry



## THE STAFF

for what has happened ; I wish I knew better how it had come about. But it is annoying, of course, chiefly for your sake. I never thought she could take it so to heart. I was so pleased that your friends should come to see you. Especially these girls. All the same, and perhaps it was that feeling which influenced me, have you been careful enough in the choice of one of them, Milla ? ”

“ What do you mean ? ”

“ Nothing particular ; don’t be so vehement, my dear ! You do not quite understand me. A girl who is so uncertain of herself and—well—whom one can so easily confuse—there might come a time when you would repent that you had been intimate with her.”

Milla got up, literally as white as a sheet. She felt exactly as though he had spoken of her ; there are very few girls of her age who would not have felt so. But she did not say a word. She cried bitterly as she went into her bedroom, shutting the door behind her.

The next day, the moment the time for recreation was sounded, Milla took Tora by the arm, and during every recreation it was the same thing. They were both beaming with good-humour ; Nora and Tinka greatly admired Milla for this. They had not thought that she had so much heart and spirit.

This little occurrence, more than anything else laid the foundation of their friendship.

The Staff was formed.

## CHAPTER III

### THE SOCIETY

It was soon noticed that the whole of the senior class and that next to it had come under a single influence.

Rendalen was so much struck by the alteration, without understanding the ground for it, that at last he made inquiries, and it was explained to him. He was much amused, gave the four girls their celebrated name, and at the same time suggested that they should form a "Society." It was true that they already had social evenings at his mother's, and they would continue these, but it would be better if they took the whole affair into their own hands; select the subjects for readings and lectures, or for discussion, among themselves. The last especially. Girls had so many "fancies" in their heads that they ought to learn in early life to be able to carry out a thought, to pursue a special interest. A Society! The senior class is to institute a Society. They may invite their friends from the town or the elder girls from the second class. They will be allowed to speak at the meetings on what subjects they

## THE SOCIETY

choose, invite whom they like to take part in the readings and music, they and no one else. They were to be empowered to make rules, elect a president and secretary, impose fines! What fancies this awakened, not in the senior class alone, but in all of them, down to the little ones who learned to spell and sing songs about the cat. What a stir at meal-times, what a whispering during lessons, what commotions at play-time! When a school is excited by a question which must not be openly discussed in lesson hours, it causes despair among the teachers. No one studies, no one listens, no one keeps order or remembers anything. If one wishes really to be amused by the suppressed excitement of the class, one must not stand in front of them; there they restrain themselves.

No, take up your position behind them and observe their plaits; you might imagine that they had gained an independent life—they jump, they dance, they curl and uncurl themselves. The changes of colour during this extreme restlessness are comical. All the fiery red, sandy and brown-red, up to black, look as though they were wet or shining with oil, or take a dead colour like coffee grounds. There are locks which are black above and brown underneath, and those of absolute raven black; there are light ones in every shade of ashen, of yellow, or an ugly mixture of both, with green for a foundation. All these assume the wonderful changes of colour which belong to their years. The braids are as excited as though they were chattering to each other, playing tricks on

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

one another, springing towards each other. The life behind is a perfect reflex of that in front.

At the first—that is to say, the preliminary—meeting of the Society, Nora was elected president; Tinka was so accustomed to have all the work put upon her that she knew beforehand that she would be chosen secretary; she was right, she was chosen unanimously.

It had this advantage, Nora considered, that she would thus be able to copy the minutes of the proceedings for Frederik. It was true that their earliest determination was that the proceedings should not be made public, but then Tinka was engaged.

Otherwise they began without written rules, but Frederik wrote from Christiania requiring the most clearly defined ones. He sent a draft. There were fines for non-attendance, fines for disregarding the rules therein set down, fines for every other kind of disorder, fines for omitting to vote. But the girls took it more practically than he—the donkey—as Tinka called him on this occasion. Nora and she worked out, quite quietly, a new set of rules; they were discussed at the next meeting amid some disorder; rules did not appear to be to their taste.

A great deal of fun was made in the town over the "Society;" there were some, however, who considered it unbecoming, some thought it dangerous, but when a theatrical company visited the town and its most select representation fell on the same day as a meeting of the Society, and the members, with a few exceptions, were with diffi-

## THE SOCIETY

culty persuaded to sacrifice this meeting, it was allowed that a proof had been given of their zeal. No one thought it worth while to raise the question again as regarded the chief representation; they were left in peace.

Very soon a serious error showed itself in the rules of the Society. Any one might anonymously propose a subject for discussion to the president, and it was decided by vote whether it should be placed on the agenda.

Thus it was anonymously proposed to discuss "Immortality," but this did not obtain a single vote. The proposer was evidently not a member. Another proposal ran, "Ought men to be allowed to wear moustaches?" and this was written in the same hand. It was now suggested that no notice should be taken of any communication which was not laid on the secretary's table during the course of the meeting. It was objected that the proposal in this case would no longer remain anonymous, but they were sufficiently confident in their own adroitness, for it was adopted.

Although the discussions were absolutely private, it was maintained in the town that one young lady in the course of her lecture had declared that it was most pitiful of men that they could not keep their vows of chastity so well as women. It was then that Dösen composed his famous "*Nara, Tora, ora pro nobis.*"

With this exception it was not certain what the girls discussed, they had agreed to pretend that everything that was said about them was true, a roguish Freemasonry kept this joke going.

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

One of those who teased them the most was Consul Engel. He had soon made his peace with the Staff, having sent his apologies through his daughter. Besides this, he had presented Tora with a nest of Japanese boxes, in the smallest of which was a charming pin. In order to make everything smooth again, he gave a "Reconciliation Dinner," to which Milla invited several of her friends. An enormous doll had been sent by *grande vilesse*, which he set up on the table and ceremoniously introduced to the four girls. It was magnificent; Tinka had put on her stoutest dress; Tora, who was in a wild mood, sat next to Milla. She chattered without stopping for a moment, so that Milla had to pinch her under the table to make her be silent, at which Tora laughed as though she were mad. Nora ran to the piano in the middle of dessert, to sing a song which the Consul had never heard. He declared afterwards that he had never amused himself more innocently. His only notion of talking to them was to tease them, his favourite theme was the Society. They laughed at his jokes and kept them up, but they would not give in; for women are used to having the things they are fond of held up to contempt. The Society was a new thing in their lives, soon it became something more. But to show this we must return to one who is waiting for us. Anna Rogne did not come to school that Monday; Milla came up to muster with her heart full of self-reproach. Directly after school she drove round to see her, but Anna was ill; her aunts came out smiling and told her that she could not be dis-

## THE SOCIETY

turbed. The next day Milla came again. She asked if she might not at least be allowed to see the invalid. Anna and she had begun to read *Fabiola* together ; might she not read aloud to her ? "Little Anna hoped she would excuse her," they said smiling, and Milla went away. Anna was away three weeks, and Milla called two or three times more, but did not see her. After that she gave up the attempt.

Anna was not ill, she told her aunts openly what was the matter ; she had been deceived and slighted—nay, more than that, she had been robbed. What she meant by this last she would not explain for a long time ; she could not. She must be quite alone. They could hear her the whole day walking about in the attic, and sometimes in the night as well ; they were terribly frightened, but did as she wished. They always told her when they were going to have prayers, but she would never join them ; when she noticed their increasing astonishment and anxiety, she at last told them that *that* had been her greatest loss ; for all that she valued most she had shared with Milla. Not to speak of their mutual profession, there was not a prayer, not a hymn, not a favourite passage of Scripture which had not been exchanged between her and her friend, as lovers exchange their betrothal rings, make presents to each other, and kiss each other's portraits.

She could no longer bear to see, to be present, to hear or think any more about the subject.

She did not cry, at all events not when any one saw her ; little Anna had a strong will. She

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

looked on what had happened as one foe looks at another. Her feelings did not take the form of *pain*, but of *anger*. She hated the others, she pitied herself. The misapprehension she had laboured under, up to the last hour of that last day when she stood before Milla's door and heard the others laughing inside—could anything more absurd be imagined! What had she not, in utmost seriousness, shared with a girl like that, and the inward strength with which she had credited her; there were no bounds to her sense of shame when she thought of it, and yet she was obliged to think of it. She forced herself to confess it to her aunts, she forced herself to probe down into the most remote causes; it became an employment which brought others in its train. She roused herself, began to stir about, to take long lonely walks, and at last to read. At the end of three weeks she returned to school, rather paler than usual and a little thinner, but in all other respects, apparently, just as before. She did not take her old place, but was still friendly with every one, even with Milla. Milla made no further attempts at explanation, though it was not perhaps without her knowledge that Tora did so. Anna listened to her, and asked for a little yellow cotton; she would return it the next day. She attended all the meetings of the Society most regularly; it was evident that it interested her, but she took no active part.

Just before Christmas Rendalen was invited, on a suggestion of Nora, to tell them something about Henrik Ibsen's "Ghosts." He refused



## THE SOCIETY

this, but asked leave to speak to them a little on hereditary responsibility ; he considered that in this, when it had been thoroughly worked out and realised, were contained several new moral laws—indeed, that a revolution would be caused by it in many things.

There was great eagerness over this ; they looked forward to a quiet and interesting account, but were given a wild though stirring lecture. The girls were not less frightened by Rendalen's personal agitation than by his words. At the end he shouted out that those who passed on an hereditary disease to their children—those, for example, who had frequent insanity in their families, and nevertheless, married ; those who, though weakened by debauchery, brought children into the world ; those who, for the sake of money, married cripples or unhealthy people and endowed their children with these afflictions—were worse than the greatest scoundrels, worse than thieves, forgers, robbers, murderers ; that he would maintain.

Something must have happened : for several days Fru Rendalen had gone about with red eyes, and he himself had been away, probably to Christiania. Anna came forward and thanked him for his lecture in her own *prétentieuse* manner ; after he had gone, she said it was the best she had heard. Only one person agreed with her, and that was Miss Hall ; the others said nothing, there was a painful silence. At last some one said that the lecture appeared to her to be terribly violent. Little Anna replied that people must be roused, everything was made into an *amusement*.

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

There was too much of that in the Society itself. This caused still greater discord ; Nora was annoyed, and asked if Anna would not in that case do something to help it. Anna coloured, but to every one's astonishment she replied : "Yes, she would try."

She disappeared from school for several days ; but she announced that she would give a lecture at the next meeting. She wished that Rendalen, Fru Rendalen, and Karl Vangen should hear it ; this was certainly not hiding her light under a bushel, her companions thought. Of course the invited guests came.

When little Anna arrived she looked overstrung, her hands trembled as her thin fingers turned the pages of her manuscript and arranged the lights on the tribune. Her voice and delivery were measured, sometimes almost sharp ; she did not often raise her large eyes, but when she did so it was with a significance which was most irritating. She read her lecture—the opening was especially pointed :

"Woman does not labour to improve herself in the same degree that she expects man to do. She does not lay aside the failings which she acquired when in another and worse position. I will this evening mention one fault—lying. In her position as the weaker, woman has accustomed herself to lying, but she is no longer so defenceless as to need this. Thus I consider that in making herself appear so gentle, so pious, so modest, so lovable before strangers, even if only one is present, she lies. It is the same thing

when, a straight course being disagreeable to her, she at once takes a crooked one ; she gives a false reason, she makes excuses. If there is anything to be done which has grown distasteful she pleads a headache ; if any one calls whom she does not wish to see, she is 'out,' though she is sitting in the parlour. It does not disturb her in the least to make her servant, her daughter, or her friend lie for her when she cannot do so herself.

"Some ladies, possibly a large proportion, have so accustomed themselves to giving untrue reasons, or to concealing the real ones, to making up excuses, that they do it without any necessity ; they delight in it as in a kind of coquetry.

"Would this were only in their relations with mankind, but it is the same towards God. I will quote a writer on the subject ; he says, 'It is difficult to judge woman's religious faith so long as religion remains her single intellectual interest ; but when one sees a hundred, two hundred, three hundred ladies round one fashionable preacher, one suspects mischief. The easiest thing to think of is to allow oneself to be guided by another's words ; it is only a step further to be enthusiastic about the preacher himself, easiest of all to feign an enthusiasm which others feel.

"The faith which has lost its ideals on earth, and therefore transfers them to heaven, is certainly not so secure of a good reception there as the clergy promise. As a rule, there does not remain much more than a vague need.

"There are besides many women who are very cautious ; it is best to make things safe for

them and theirs. I often wonder what our Lord says when they begin.'"

She quoted further, and many of the quotations aroused laughter. Karl Vangen was especially amused. From this she passed on to woman's share in societies for charitable objects; how the needs of the poor furnished an excuse for gay dances ("the proceeds for the poor," as they say); how amusing balls and even theatrical performances are organised in aid of the sufferers from shipwreck or fire.

She described how a society such as this trifled with great questions and raved about particular lecturers. Anna was severe, as young people generally are when they take upon themselves to criticise.

When she left the tribune she did not grasp what was said to her; she answered at cross purposes, or asked them what they had said, but little by little she recovered herself; when she looked for Rendalen he was gone.

She was utterly astonished; she slipped across to Fru Rendalen to hear the reason. Of course, she had to begin by asking her what *she* had thought of it.

"Yes, my child, there is a great deal of right in what you say, but I fear that you will all inflate it into something to be taken seriously. Poor things, you will learn then to lie to some purpose. Few women can take this seriously, my child, but they can affect to do so and overstrain themselves as well—ah yes, they often become horribly unnatural——"

## THE SOCIETY

At last, slowly and cautiously, came Anna's question, "Why did Herr Rendalen go?"

"Heaven knows!" She sighed, looked towards the door where he had disappeared, got up, and left the room.

Karl Vangen was talking to Tora; he now saw that Anna was disengaged, and came up to her to say that he had been "very much delighted" with some of the quotations; he knew the book. Karl Vangen had been on the high road to become a fashionable preacher; happily he had escaped, but the terror still remained with him. Anna knew this from her aunts, so she had the secret key to his remarks. He believed entirely in woman's religious convictions, he said, and did not quite agree with her.

She asked him his opinion in other respects. "I know so little about women in other ways," he said, colouring slightly, "I dare not enter into it."

As soon as ever the elders were gone, the enthusiasm of the girls broke out. "Little Anna" was the eldest of them, a thing people very easily forgot—she was so undeveloped in appearance. They had never thought her capable of such an effort. "What a remarkable point of view! how well expressed! and that by one of ourselves."

Nora and Tora were especially charmed. "That is just what we are, just as untruthful, principally in little things of course. And how we play with serious questions. We must have deeds as well, or if not deeds, then——"

"Snuff," said somebody, and the whole party burst into roars of laughter, but they began

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

again : " It is true, Heaven knows it is true. It must be altered ; it is shameful to be as we are."

As a beginning they would all escort Anna home. Yes, they would ! And so they did, and the two crooked old aunts were startled out of their sleep when, between eleven and twelve at night, they heard the swarm buzzing before the house, and the call of " Good-night, good-night, good-night," from twenty ringing girls' voices. And little Anna herself ! She had to go in and tell them what it was all about, but she merely said they had come home with her. She could not say more just then. She felt so uncertain. She had written this lecture with her heart's blood ; she had turned her bitterest feelings into an assault ; she had felt certain that she would be assailed for it, hated for it, and lo and behold, she had been thanked for it over and over again ; nothing had been heard but exultation and praise.

She lay in bed, but could not sleep. Was it from pleasure ? Was it from fear ? Or had she been for the first time moved by them ? It was not disagreeable.

At the same time more than one little head lay pondering what course should be pursued. The impulse to take this seriously, to be terribly truthful, must have nourishment, otherwise it would certainly die. And they found something real to do !

Milla was in mourning ; Milla could not go to balls this Christmas. They would none of them go to balls this Christmas either. Yes, laugh if you like, but it was unanimously determined upon. One does not desert a friend in sorrow : not one

## THE SOCIETY

of the Staff would go to a dance the whole winter through. Milla felt flattered by so much sympathy, but—— “No buts!” Immovable, unanimous determination.

And that should not be all, they would think of something more.

The young fellows of the town mourned over the loss of so many merry young partners that Christmas, but all unavailingly. Indeed, it pleased the girls that their absence was regretted.

As has been said, it was not to end here.

## CHAPTER IV

### ON THE STEPS

THIS union of the leaders among the girls, this real desire for knowledge and independent thought, even if it had to endure criticism and even a little derision, was still an incontrovertible proof that the school was now on the high road to success. Even if there were derision expressed in the town, there could be no doubt that every one was struck by the decided, and above all intelligent, comprehension which the superiority of the apparatus, experiments, and method aroused in the scholars on subjects which every one understood, and which belonged to the most special needs of life.

At home the girls overflowed with narrations and desire for information, and constantly asked permission to buy materials for experiments in chemistry and physics, microscopes, and historical pictures which illustrated beliefs and habits of life through all ages.

There was no longer any comparison between girls and boys when energy and information were in question.



## ON THE STEPS

This made the lesson hours happy ; the great gatherings for " breakfast " at twelve o'clock were feasts, and the pupils ran down the slope in the afternoon without books, unburdened by lessons—free, free, free !

But the happiest of them all remained behind, Fru Rendalen and Karl Vangen.

How Fru Rendalen hurried about with her spectacles awry, a habit she had acquired in later years ; it was like meeting a load of hay at hay-harvest, it smells so sweet from such a distance, and one so gladly stands aside to let the mighty, useful, close-packed object pass. Karl Vangen was one constant smile ; he had no time to leave off. He beamed with delight if any one so much as looked towards the school, and would tell, over and over again, all the little incidents which occurred there : they were every one either remarkable or amusing.

It was only Tomas who was not quite in accord with them, but there never was much " comfort " about him, if by that one understands confidential intercourse, and even good temper. He either wanted tall Vangen to " give him a back " out in the garden walks, or even sometimes in the sitting-room, while he jumped over him as one boy jumps over another ; or he walked up and down, up and down, generally whistling, with his hands in his pockets, till it made one giddy to look at him ; or else he would play the piano by the hour together. Sometimes he worked for, and in, the school without intermission ; or read a new book regardless of any interruption ; or he took endless walks

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

or read aloud, and amused himself with the girls as though they were all comrades ; or else he could not bear them, or the school, or anything which belonged to it.

At such times his mother had to take the literature lesson for him, Miss Hall the chemistry and physics, Nora the singing ; he would not, he could not.

Then he would come back again, brighter and happier than ever, and do the work of two. His mother put this down as the result of all the years he had lived without regular employment. If they had company he did not appear at all, or else came and carried everything before him, or came and sat silent. If he spoke to any one, it was "Yes, just so," "Quite right." And then he would leave the room and not return. Looked at in a certain way, this showed genius : there was something of a genius about Tomas Rendalen.

Before he went to America he had "discovered" a history teacher : he was very great at "discoveries." She was called Karen Lote, and taught needlework, writing, and drawing. Rendalen had noticed her acquirements in the different kinds of drawing, and found out that the girl possessed a by no means insignificant knowledge of history. "Extend that into the history of civilisation," he said. He was never tired of giving this advice. "Here at home the history of civilisation is worse than meagre, and it is the only one which is worth anything in a school."

He had then begun to make the large collection of historical pictures which the school now

## ON THE STEPS

possessed, and through these he captivated her interest ; he kept it, while he was abroad, by sending a number of these pictures to her, as well as books and advice ; and he was hardly home again before he undertook the history lessons of the whole school to explain to her what his ideas were ; he sought to show development and connection by a clear historical summary accompanied by maps and pictures ; he made it slight for the younger, and more elaborate for the elder ones ; only using details as characteristics. He made it one-sided, but there was power and colour in its historical representations. Karen Lote was captivated ; the novelty of his appearance, his opinions, his wonderful talent for teaching, his inimitable way of making one believe there was nothing in the world for him beyond what was before him at the moment ; his exquisite taste in dress, his well-ordered person, even the slight odour of delicate scent which always followed him, all gave the girl a deep interest in him. Nothing in the six-and-twenty years of her life had ever in the slightest degree approached it. To think of being helped in her work by him every day ! The misunderstandings and persecutions which he went through, and his sufferings under them, brought her feelings to a pitch of enthusiasm. But she did not trouble any one with it. Then came the time when he became the principal of the school. He would come and listen to her teaching whenever he had a spare moment, share eagerly in it, or go away without saying a word ; remain away for a long time, then come again every day, and take the

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

whole lesson out of her hands; or else walk up and down, up and down, and then remain away again.

Just before Christmas Karen Lote went to Fru Rendalen, and told her that she could not stay a day longer in the school. If she merely heard Rendalen's step in the passage she trembled; when he was near she could not relate the simplest occurrence or give an explanation. "But why?" He treated her with the greatest contempt; she burst into tears. "Contempt?" Yes! either he continually interrupted her, took the whole lesson away from her, or else he did not consider her worth correcting, turned his back on her, did not bow, did not come at all. There was no end to her complaints.

Fru Rendalen assembled the teachers and laid Fröken Lote's complaint before them, convinced that it must be the most extraordinary misunderstanding. But the teacher who had succeeded Fröken Lote as drawing mistress assured her that if she had not had a mother to support, she would have left long ago; she would not have borne his continual corrections in the children's hearing; he was an unbearable tyrant.

Everything must be done in one particular way, without the least variation. He had made her so nervous that she trembled if she even heard him in the passage. And she cried too.

The startled Fru Rendalen turned quickly to the others. "What could this mean? The teachers of languages, her pupils from their childhood, her friends, who through her help had improved themselves abroad, they must speak."

## ON THE STEPS

They felt sure that Rendalen had not the least idea that he "set people right," and as little that he offended people by interfering, so that the children noticed his immense air of superiority, but all the same it was often very annoying. He was so uncertain both with teachers and children, he never took things twice in the same way, it was always according to his temper. The conclusion which they all came to was that he was most unfit to direct a school. Miss Hall herself, who otherwise had no complaint to make, agreed with this.

Fru Rendalen implored them, for God's sake, to reconsider it; surely they did not wish to ruin the school; she was much agitated, and said that provisionally she would resume the direction. But they must not let this be known. She broke down with all the violence which was natural to her. The others were frightened, there was a touching scene; they praised her son, one against the other; nay, any one who had not heard what had gone before, would have believed that they were all glowing with enthusiasm for him. After all, to form a wonderful plan for a school, according to all the best examples of modern times, and himself to be an exceptional teacher, was something quite different, and a great deal more than to be an able principal. They and his mother soon agreed over this, and consoled themselves with it as well as they could.

But this school had been the object of Rendalen's life; if he were to lose this there would be nothing left for him. From the time that Augusta died,

### THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

and he learned that it would be better that he should not found a family, the idea of taking his mother's school, and making it all that she had dreamed of, but had not accomplished, had been betrothal, marriage, and the foundation of a family to him. He was proud of it. This gave the intense energy to his early youth, to his work, to his sense of right. It was the object of Karl Vangen's unfailing admiration, the secret text for Fru Rendalen's conversations and letters.

Notwithstanding this, temptations came, and his unruly nature did not always emerge victorious from them, but each time he was seized with a feeling of shame for his ideal, which amounted to dread—that awful dread which his mother had felt while she bore him under her bosom. She had often described this in vivid colours, but it was nothing compared to what he had gone through; it had been terrible. This drove him back to his mother's confidence, and made him hold that confidence fast. There was sober earnest between these two, they had a common aim in life. It might have been that he would have cast her, his aim of life, and this dread to the winds, if his passions had concentrated themselves on, or been seized by, any one person, for there was a wild energy in him which would have made him cling closely to another; but the hereditary restlessness in his nature mingled one impression with another, his dread had time to come between them with ever stronger force, and it became at last the most powerful of all. The aim of life was saved. From the time that he had conquered, a dissatisfied feel-

## ON THE STEPS

ing developed itself; it had always been there; it reminded one of his father's power of imagination, his love of perfection.

His studies were forced. Never one thing at a time, but one clashing with the other. If the examination subjects had not in such a special degree been necessary for him, he would never have passed one at all; he was ready long before the time with some things, and was as much behind with others. He was always in advance with the subject he was full of at the moment, it was a link in a visible or ideal entirety. To Karl Vangen, who knew his method of study, it was amazing what he accomplished. It was the same thing with his intercourse with his fellow-creatures; he often seemed to be inattentive, and yet he received original impressions, but they were all on the same lines. He saw images and demonstrations in anything he was engaged in; not people, but phenomena; not facts, but ideas. As long as Karen Lote was learning his historical method she interested him deeply, but afterwards not in the least; it was much the same with the other teachers, excepting Miss Hall; her teaching was new, and he was eager to see the result of it—first intellectually, then morally.

But *his own work*? When the long restless rush about the world after appliances and methods was over, after the plans for the school, conceived years ago, and since then endlessly arranged and drafted, were at last set going; especially after the rude resistance from without was overcome, what was it that gradually came over him? Could

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

he not? Would he not? Was it no longer enough for him?

Every one round him rejoiced in the school, his mother's delight in especial was touching. "This is the school that I have dreamed of, my son, my dear Tomas!" He heard it nearly every day, he thanked her and kissed her for it, he needed it; but all the same . . . . As for teaching, his principal talent, he could interest himself in making a thing absolutely clear, and in having the main points properly remembered, the most difficult ones understood; it could delight him to give a new view of something to the elder pupils, or to direct their attention to a question of the day. Whenever a problem presented itself, he would take it up with patient ingenuity; beyond that there was nothing—no, nothing! He realised his failings thoroughly, self-occupied though he was; they harassed him more and more. There were times when he could not endure the school. Then he felt himself without spirit, without aspiration, without—he could almost have said without affection—if his mother had not been there, and Karl as well; he was deeply attached to Karl.

This was no longing for a wife and family, at all events in no special degree; indeed, he felt no particular attraction to anything.

Was this the cause of his unhappiness—that he could not attach himself firmly to any conditions? He had been able to do so as a child.

A man who has deliberated in this way from one day to another, and at last, one evening, re-



## ON THE STEPS

ceives his mother's tears and lamentations because the teachers can no longer endure him as principal, does not start up as at something unexpected. Tomas remained at the piano, where he had been seated when she came in ; he touched it with one finger now and then during her long and interrupted narration ; he saw her despair and concealed his own. He felt as though now he had nothing more to do here.

He observed quietly that perhaps she had better resume the direction of the school for a time ; he went on strumming as he said this, as though it had no further significance. She answered that she had already promised them to do so. He grew as white as a sheet. She hastened to add, that of course only he could superintend his own plan ; she begged him to speak to the teachers at once ; he never would speak to any one, they entirely misunderstood him ; he offended them by showing no confidence in them, and he was not always considerate. Did he not like them ?

This was too much for Tomas ; he flung himself down on the piano and cried, got up hastily, put on his hat and coat and went out, heedless of his mother's prayers to him to stay and talk it over with her, as they used to do in old days. He could not do it ; for there was something in his mother's behaviour towards him which wounded him. When he had come home she had received him with the greatest admiration, everything he said and did was right ; but after the lecture she began to doubt. This had gradually increased, until now she put a note of interrogation to every-

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

thing he said. At the first complaint from the teachers she had taken the school from him ; and she could reconcile this with her pride in his way of ordering it, and a crooning quiet delight over its success.

Not that her doubt was greater than a practical understanding like hers had perhaps a right to ; he did not blame her for it, but he could not bear it.

This affair with the teachers was dreadful. He really considered them most excellent, none more so than Karen Lote, otherwise he would never have troubled himself about her.

There must be something at the very root of his behaviour towards people, which was terribly astray when he could be thus utterly misunderstood. Perhaps his own feeling of emptiness and distaste arose from the same cause.

These ladies had raved about him. They and the senior class, and . . . Was that, too, nothing but a delusion, or was it past and gone ?

"Raved about him." What is that ? He drove it from him with contempt, yet once it pleased and deluded him. He had believed it would always continue.

No, he who would have the affection of others must show affection to them. And he could not do it—in the way that others could.

After all that was not strange. His race had perhaps exhausted its power of winning human affection.

Was not that the natural result when generation after generation broke down mankind's precepts of fidelity, and flung aside man's good opinion ? The race itself had been ruined, as each

## ON THE STEPS

one weakened himself and his offspring—ay, and others and their offspring as well.

He walked into the country to the left—the same walk that he had taken that spring evening after he had given his lecture. He recalled to his mind how happy had been his return from America, how he had dreamed of giving his countrymen an example which, if they would follow it, would shine throughout the world. What was nobler for a small country than to centre its greatest powers on the teaching of its children, to expend its surplus there; let the great nations waste theirs on armies!

He remembered how it then delighted him to think that in this way the sins of his forefathers might be expiated.

Everything on earth had been thus developed.

Awakening had come to the strongest races. Instinctively they had felt their failings, and had sought to combat them by an admixture of fresh blood. Everything, therefore, that is strong and good has some family for its progenitor, whose sufferings have been the foundation of its needs, its needs the foundation of its work; its work, its self-command, the foundation of its discoveries—all gathering round the original discovery. When the school should be alive with a hundred young creatures; when sparkling eyes gazed upon the aim which he had set up; when the elder ones among them, influenced by him, and in their turn influenced others—hoisted their colours—it would be remembered that they had lived in the house of one particular family, from

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

that family they would have received their instruction. It was *he* who had made the school.

But there lay an inherent weakness in its inmost recesses. The germs of destruction lay in him who had built it up. He could not advance it further. He did not possess the necessary long-suffering gentleness. Plenty of foresight, energy, ambition, but—talents for war, perhaps, but not for peace.

As he had walked along that evening after the lecture, sick at heart, anxious—ah ! how anxious ! because the certainty of years had been baffled, Karl Vargen had trudged silently by his side like a great long-legged dog with honest eyes. He went the same way now, only it was winter, and he was alone ; he was ashamed to have any one with him. The suspicion of insecurity which had shaken him the first time was now a certainty. He could not go on—O God ! he could not : he was a blight in the school.

The snow in the fields had melted, but farther away it lay in patches, looking ghostly in the moonlight. It still lay thick under the fir-woods ; and here and there on the road, which had frozen hard with deep ruts in it, and small sharp stones and solid horse-dung. Where it was bare, or partly bare, it was difficult to walk. He came back so weary in body and mind that he never remembered to have felt more tired. By the new churchyard, where his father and grandfather lay, and where the sea washed up to the other side of the roadway, rolling and black, he felt that a little might bring him into the one or beyond the other

## ON THE STEPS

—or perhaps to both—they were not incompatible.

It was past twelve, as on the night of the lecture ; he would not go home before he felt certain that his mother had given up waiting for him. Under ordinary circumstances she went to bed between nine and ten. But as he struggled up the avenue, he saw that there was a light in the sitting-room ; and as he got a little further, that there was one in Karl's room as well. If he had not been so utterly weary he would have turned back, but now things must go as they could.

His mother met him in the hall with a light in her hand. " Oh, Tomas, how you have frightened me ! " she whispered.

What did she mean by that ? He looked at her ; poor thing, she appeared at least ten years older, with such red eyes—so upset, so miserably overdone.

She began, " Tomas, just let us——"

" No, mother," he waved her away with his hand ; " I am so fearfully, oh, so fearfully tired." He went slowly across her room to the inner passage without a good-night, without looking round.

She heard his step in the passage, heard him open the door of his room, shut it, and turn the key on the inside ! It always awakened memories, that dreadful sound !

Why did he do it ? It seemed as though he were shutting her away from him.

As he was lighting his candle he heard Karl at the door between their rooms. Tomas set down the candle, came out from behind the curtain, and

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

saw Karl's pale, anxious face looking in from the doorway.

Why had he and his mother sat up, each in their own room? Evidently so that the mother should be able to talk to her son alone when he came in.

Tomas flung himself on Karl's neck and sobbed violently. All that he had held back, when he saw his mother, now found vent. Karl's firm confidence in him was his chief support. That confidence was there now, he could see it through all his distress precisely as he saw the light streaming behind Karl's head and body in the doorway. It was dark between them. "No, dear Karl, not to-night, I am so tired." Slowly, noiselessly, Karl drew his long legs back again and shut the door behind him. The door-handle was turned, oh, so gently.

Tomas went straight to bed, and slept at once and without interruption through the night. When he woke, raised himself and looked at the clock, it was past eight. The sorrows of yesterday, which had at once rushed upon him, yielded before this proof of a long sound sleep. "There cannot possibly be so much the matter as I believed, if I am not worse than this." He jumped up. "There must be some other work in life reserved for me, if this is not to be the one." He dressed himself quickly, and while doing so determined to go away for several days. He wished to consider, and to be calm while he did so.

This was all the information which his mother received when she came in as he sat at break-

## ON THE STEPS

fast. He sent a message to Karl, and left at ten o'clock. This was not altogether disagreeable to Fru Rendalen. "He has such sudden changes," she thought. "He will very likely return home a different man." His great failing, of talking and acting according to the temper of the moment, made her take this view, made her question all he said. He was conscious of this now. He hated it.

This time, however, she was mistaken; he returned exactly the same as he had gone away, only she noticed the first time that she talked to him that he was a little bitter against the teachers: "ungrateful asses," he called them. He had taught them more than it was in the power of any human being to do who had not travelled as he had done, and had his experience and reading; he would have nothing to do with them. He annoyed them by his elegant courtliness. This amused him; he was really dreadful with them. He resumed his teaching, with the exception of the singing, which was given over to Nora, who was now both pupil and teacher. He declared that she possessed the gift of teaching in the highest degree.

"Perhaps he could interest himself in the school again," thought Karl, "if there were a new staff of teachers." He spoke of this to Fru Rendalen. She would try to find out, and began by talking to Tomas about the observatory which they had arranged in a small way in the tower. They had been obliged to stop for want of money. By next summer she hoped to have the means to set it going.

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

"God knows where I shall be then," he answered, and hurried away. "If I were to speak plainly to the teachers," thought his indefatigable mother, "if I could induce them to beg his pardon." She assembled them one day just before Christmas, and told them, betraying emotion as she did so, that her son had repeatedly let fall remarks which showed that he intended to go away. There was a movement of dismay.

Fröken Lote, on whom all eyes were fixed, at last broke the silence. She had not meant it in that way, she had only meant—she had really not meant anything—but she was so dreadfully nervous. She thought he was not pleased with her. The drawing and needle-work mistress, a clear-headed, tall, fair woman, coloured furiously. The Spenser method of drawing which Rendalen had introduced was not clear to begin with, she said, but he was always beyond her; but for all that she ought not to have said anything, indeed she ought not. She began to cry.

The teachers all protested that they felt the greatest gratitude; he had, of course, seen and heard so much on every subject, but it was most embarrassing that he treated them like dirt beneath his feet.

Fru Rendalen took off her spectacles, wiped them, and put them on again; pulled them off again, rubbed them, and put them on.

Well then, Miss Hall would say what was the matter. It was that he treated everything and everybody so unevenly. This made the teachers uncertain, and destroyed the children's sense of



## ON THE STEPS

justice, and that was almost the greatest loss that a child could sustain. She would so gladly have spoken to Rendalen, said the little American, but he made himself so unapproachable. To-day, too, she felt nervous.

This destroyed Fru Rendalen's plan ; she did not know what to answer. All further negotiations were meanwhile broken off.

A loud chorus of joyous girls' voices sounded from the steps, and they all hurried to the window. It was Nora and her pupils. These last few days before Christmas, the pupils had but few lessons to do, and therefore had employed themselves in practising some part songs, the practice always concluding out on the steps—one of Nora's many fancies.

This gave such immense pleasure, that not only all the little ones, who did not join in the singing, waited up there till the great moment, but people would collect in the avenue. As soon as the girls came racing round the corner in walking dress and mounted the steps, the crowd in the avenue increased and drew nearer ; Fru Rendalen and the teachers had put on their things, and were now standing at the open windows. The girls had arranged themselves from top to bottom of the steps ; the little ones, who did not sing, occupied the sides. Right at the bottom stood Nora, with her fair hair turned back under the hood which was always on the back of her neck.

She had adopted Rendalen's method of conducting—the only thing that restless being did quietly ; he merely moved his right wrist, and gave the sign

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

with his left hand. Nora carefully held her right hand in the same place as he did, before her breast. She heard about it often enough.

The song sounded grandly from the steps, the notes were powerfully given. It might be, too, that the view before them heightened the effect by its beauty ; perhaps, too, "An Old Manuscript,"\* which had just been printed in a Christmas number, and which every third person in the town, from twelve years old knew, at first, second, or third hand, may also have enhanced it, for perhaps those dark voices from the past were heard at the same time, and by the power of contrast made the girls' song brighter, and the moment fairer.

Below them lay the town, with the harbour between the two points of land ; now that winter was here, full of ships from side to side. At the head of the bay, along the clay banks, were all the workshops and the great timber-yards. To the left, the mountain, with the crowd of houses at the top, the boat harbour below, and out beyond the mountain and the town, the islands and the open sea. Weather on the coast is uncertain ; generally, as they looked out, taking in the view as they sang, there were either driving clouds or gleams of sunlight over the landscape, or if it were peaceful and bright inland, it was threatening out to sea. Perhaps this may explain why the girls generally chose melancholy songs.

For the teachers as well as for the pupils, the singing on the steps, from its first beginning, had been the glory of the school. If the work from

\* Some parts of it have been used in the Introduction.

## ON THE STEPS

every class during every week in the year could have woven itself into a thousand delicate threads, and fallen on them as crowns; if all the fruitful incentives, small determinations, uncertain beginnings, could have joined in harmony in those voices, the singing could not have made them happier. As far as the teachers were concerned, perhaps for the very reason that, at the same time, something had occurred to pain them.

The elder girls, especially the members of the Society, looked upon this time as one for exchange of thought. All those higher ideas which one has in common with others, come to the front when there is singing; all strivings after the ideal, have a natural relationship to harmonised notes.

But he who felt it the most was one who had hidden himself behind a closed window, because he would on no account be seen.

He saw Nora beating time, standing there in her light cloak, her hood flung back on her neck.

The song, which sounded out over the town, the one which had first been heard by Fru Engel's grave, contained, as it sounded from these girlish voices, all that he wished for on earth.

How miserable it made him now! He tried, as a counterpoise, to remember all that he had conquered before in many a hard struggle. It was something to remember.

It was not an ordinary victory which he had achieved: was it to end in sorrow? Would the singing soon cease, or sound again after he was gone? He thought of his mother. It was he in

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

reality who was "on the steps." Was it to be in or out?

The whole troop tore away in merry groups down the avenue. The Staff last of all, for Tora had something either to tell or propose; they walked slowly, often pausing. Yes, that was what it all depended upon; to be able to share one's joys and sorrows with others.

## V THE HUNT

### CHAPTER I

Child or woman, which is she ?  
Hard to answer that will be.  
Wouldst thou then a woman snare ?  
See a child in captive there !  
And when thou bidd'st the child to stay,  
A woman from thee flies away.

SPRING had come betimes, and great rejoicing thereat rose, from all the pupils, to the soft skies.

The spring was in their blood, bringing a restless feeling, a power of invention, glorious plans, subdued noise, effervescing spirits in its train ; these were days when the whole school routine threatened to be destroyed, and when orders seemed a mere joke. Much commotion, with scoldings, smacks, increased attention, and many arts were required before this small sphere could be guided through the dangerous region of spring without too severe collisions and shocks.

Even the Society itself was shaken. It was not possible, when the trees in the garden were bursting into leaf, to go off to the back premises and pretend that there was something in a friend's composition on ladies' modern dress. If the meet-

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

ing had been held in the wood, they might have allowed modern dress to roll about in the heather till it was torn to pieces, or they could have hung it up in a tree. They could have let the birds sing songs over it. Now they gave modern dress to the deuce, it could all be learned from a fashion book ; they simply held no meetings.

Nora employed all her powers of persuasion, all her inventive genius, in vain. A great event, however, occurred, also perhaps born of the spring and spring impulses, and the Society recovered itself.

Miss Hall had energetically sought to lay some foundation, in the senior class, for the lectures which she delivered to them on her special subject. Both she and the eldest girls in the class had really all been obliged to exert themselves. But a further result was, that during this hard work they had gained confidence in the little lady ; everything belonging to women's constitution and health, and to the tending of children, was spoken of with perfect openness. The mothers kept up as long as possible an appearance of shamefacedness on behalf of their children, who would not be shamefaced themselves. The fathers helped their better halves in this ; they were bashful to a degree. But as the shameless maidens continued to acquire knowledge, this answered no purpose.

As concerned the Society, this information, and especially this confidence with Miss Hall, had the result that, by degrees, the woman question began to be looked at in its physical aspect, and its real foundations were sought there.

A book in our literature was again brought for-

## THE HUNT

ward, which asserts that the freedom which man allows himself before marriage, and sometimes afterwards, destroys his character and woman's position, carrying faithlessness and tyranny from generation to generation.

Karen Lote had, in her studies in the history of civilisation, especially noted the history of the development of races. She knew now that the compromise which was often proposed, of giving woman the same freedom that man took for himself, would be a step in the wrong direction, an unheard-of breach of development. She advocated strongly that inviolable monogamy should be as sacred for men as for women. Miss Hall took up the subject at the next meeting, from its physical side. Can it be physically proved that man has stronger temptation than woman, and therefore has a greater excuse? She declared, on the contrary, that woman's temptation might be very much greater. Notwithstanding which, the rule was that woman respected marriage in a chaste life, while for man's part the rule might still be said to be the contrary.

This aroused violent feeling.

Man had therefore here as well, used the right of the strongest for his own advantage, but in reality with the result of rendering himself and the community depraved. Woman, on the contrary, has in civilised society, through hundreds of generations, only belonged to one man, therefore she has an inherited power of remaining faithful. It follows, of course, that man could gain this power as well.

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

During the conversation which followed the lecture, the excitement increased; and in the course of the week so many thoughts had gathered around this subject, that they had to fix an earlier date for the next meeting.

For the first time since the institution of the Society, Tinka Hansen spoke. The woman who married a man who had led an immoral life joined herself in his guilt; she condoned the ill-treatment of her sex, and was herself punished for it.

Did any woman persuade herself that a man who had accustomed himself to such a life would give it up? At all events, they could not so deceive themselves, who had during the last few years heard a series of lectures which made it plain that habit is a nerve-question; not more than one in a hundred can conquer a habit of his own free will; there must, as a rule, be some hard necessity as well.

Tinka had, as usual, discussed the subject with Frederik; it was therefore not surprising that, as she stood there, she had the authority of two.

Rarely had such noise and commotion been heard since the institution of the Society. From all sides came exclamations which clearly showed what they felt, such as, "Fancy being kissed by a man who——! Fancy being married to a man who——!"

Nora gave voice to these whispered expressions of disgust as she went up to the tribune, and said that they must not separate that evening without promising each other that *they*, at least, would do



## THE HUNT

what they could here to give woman responsibility and self-respect.

She had not finished speaking before they all stood up to express their acquiescence.

Some days later they had another meeting: something had occurred to divide their opinions.

It will be remembered that Tora was fond of telling fantastic fairy tales, and romances scarcely less so; her favourite was "A Strange Story," by Bulwer. Her little Augustus head—which was crammed with ideas of rich stuffs, of sweeping garments, of foreign speech, and home gossip, and every earthly vanity—delighted in the mysterious.

From a certain day none of her friends were allowed to hear a word more on these subjects; only one, one single one, should henceforth see this obscure side of her varied nature.

Was it because she wished to share this with but one alone, as girls so often do; or was there a little sense of mystery here as well, that he was the only one for whom this was suited?

Whenever, after this, she met Karl Vangen, whether they were alone, or if twenty were present, she always contrived that they should converse in whispers. Her friends were greatly astonished. What on earth had she to whisper about with the parson? He had recently lent her a book about John Wesley, which she devoured, as she did all books, and they had many conversations about his sudden conversions. People who came under the spell of his looks, his words, his presence, yielded to them at once, and were his from that moment. John Wesley came of a long

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

race of clergymen, both on his father's and mother's side ; naturally this had in a high degree strengthened his faith and power of preaching. It was like an electric shock, certain natures could not stand against it.

How this was made to lead up to the Kurts, who interested Tora immensely at that time, is her secret ; but honest Karl began at once to speak with animation of Tomas's struggle to free himself from the Kurt inheritance. There had been an infusion of new blood into the family before, and a struggle against its sins ; but Tomas Rendalen's bringing up and the struggle he had gone through, were worthy of his energetic character.

Vangen asked her confidentially if she had not noticed Tomas's neatness, his careful toilette ? If she had perceived the slight, hardly perceptible, odour of a delicate and very expensive scent ? It always followed him. He was always washing and bathing, added the young clergyman, blushing ; most people believed that this arose from vanity, and vain he certainly was ; but could she not guess what it meant ? Tomas Rendalen had gained in the course of his struggle the same need for, the same sacred feeling about, cleanliness with which girls are born. For him all cares for the body ; dress, scent, were a species of service for the temple ; just as it is to young women, when they have the means and time to perform it.

Some remarks of Tomas had made him understand this ; he was certain that such was the fact. But it was curious that it should take that particular form, was it not ? Perhaps it was

## THE HUNT

because he had been brought up among girls. What did she think about it? Karl Vangen hazarded this conjecture with great bashfulness. For some reason or other, it was of great importance that she should understand at once that a man might be an excellent member of society, without being exactly a dandy, and using scent.

From that moment Torr Holm had one more person to rave about, added to her rich collection!

Now she persuaded herself that she understood Rendalen's theory of life and work among them. She did not understand, or rather did not think about, the reasons for his restless moods, his want of steadfastness; her image of this "energetic" nature was not disturbed by them. She loved him. There was no other word for it. There was nothing that she would not do for him if she could, and it was thus that she expressed herself, first to her dearest friends, then to her next dearest, then to those next to them. With unflagging energy the same story, to the same tune, was repeated for the twentieth time to the last of her chain of friends before the next day was past. Such enthusiasm was infectious; those who had not raved about Tomas Rendalen before, raved about him now. Notwithstanding the red hair, the freckled skin, the broad nose, and pale screwed-up eyes, the absence of eyebrows, the restless expression—he was an ideal man! He damped their ardour a little when he came into the classrooms and strode past the forms, without looking at a single one of them; or when he hastily pitched upon something which interfered with the lesson,

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

with such violence as to make them jump ! for he was not to be trifled with ! He nevertheless became their ideal again as soon as he was gone, or, better still, if he were in the humour for teaching, and stayed and took part in it, in his clear energetic style. He had not his equal then.

But just because there was one Tomas Rendalen, it naturally happened that some of the weaker natures began to reflect : " Good heavens, he is only one, and there are so many of us." Yes, there was the question. We will not say who they were, or how many there were, who began to feel this doubt. The question is the smallest part of the affair ; it is the answer which is the serious matter. The answer ! For we may as well confess, soon as late, that some of the girls had gone a little beyond themselves that evening, when they all said " yes " to Tinka Hansen's high-minded views and Nora's proposition. These ones acknowledged afterwards that when one came to think quietly about the one whom one almost loves, or at least would willingly be loved by, and even if one knows that he has already . . . Yes, the old Kurt town was a terrible place for scandals.

One at last begins to doubt the sincerity of these expressions. Might not the young man in question, no matter what he had done, be depended upon, when he had promised *her* anything ? And when she had made him a promise in return, of course he might ! He would be a good boy, that he would, if only she got hold of him. One cannot live upon grand theories.

There were some, however, who considered

## THE HUNT

that this was treachery ; they were very angry and a new meeting was called. Those who had dared to change their opinions since the last meeting were called upon to explain themselves. For a long time no one would do so, but at last a courageous dark-haired girl declared openly that it seemed to her that they had gone too far the last time. "If all men were—as one could wish them to be—well, then. But they are not so by any means. So what is to be done? That is just how we stand."

"And so we will stand," was the answer. This heroic response elicited another in its turn, so that two parties were formed, with a third set of moderates ; no one felt certain about these last, as is often the case with a third party. Tinka Hansen (and Frederik) and all who agreed with her and him ("The Frederikers," as they were called), were for absolute equality between the sexes. Infidelity ought from henceforth to be condemned equally severely—no matter whether man or woman were guilty of it. Miss Hall was the only one among the teachers who took part in this debate, and she was a very enthusiastic Frederiker. According as our knowledge becomes more acute, she declared, the punishment of unchasteness should be the same for the two sexes. Neither ought this sin to be any longer held up as a special accusation against women. Those who made the distinction that woman's offence injured the home, while man's injured another home, another's wife or daughter, must for very shame hold their tongues.

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

Miss Hall brought this forward at least twice, for there was no answer made to it. The opposite party entirely put that on one side. They repeated over and over again that a man might be excessively worthy even if, things standing as they did at present, he had offended in this particular. Only notorious immorality made a marriage impossible. The Frederikers were scandalised at this "light-minded" talk. That was to open the door to the extension of immorality. They made use of such strong expressions, that the others became angry. There was a perfect hubbub; every one talked, no one would listen.

This was on a Thursday. The following evening, "The Staff" was assembled in Milla's room. They had begun on the same subject, but by degrees had wandered back to Rendalen, who was still of more unfailing interest than the other. Tinka was imitating Rendalen's handwriting on a large sheet of paper. The others watched her efforts with attention, his large handwriting was just the opposite to his careful toilette; it was all run together without any division, each letter and each word absolutely joined on to the others. Tinka's caricatured attempts were like so many embroidery patterns. She wrote: "I can bear it no longer; meet me in the market-place at nine o'clock." She wrote it as a commentary on what they had been talking about—namely, how delightful it would be to receive such a letter. She wrote this closely across a whole sheet of letter-paper. She decorated one sheet after another in this fashion.

## THE HUNT

Who was it who first proposed what now followed? They never could agree upon this afterwards. *One* thing is certain, that Milla alone raised any objection, but it was so feebly and laughingly made, that it might well be taken for the opposite of what it purported to be. Each one of them took charge of a note on Saturday morning; one was put into Karen Lote's cloak, one into the pocket of the drawing mistress's long faded blue wrap, the third and fourth were slipped down, one into Miss Hall's mantle, and the other into that of one of the teachers of languages.

The letters were not signed, the envelopes open and bearing no address; the request was written in so extravagant a style that the whole might pass for a joke, but that was just where the temptation lay. For, on the other side, it could not be denied that the hasty writing could very easily be mistaken for Rendalen's style when he was worried and in a hurry to finish.

At nine o'clock on Saturday evening the last of the worthy townsfolk came home from their romantic evening walks on both sides of the town, looking so peaceful and inoffensive that not even a cat could have suspected treachery. Most of them went soberly across the market-place into the town. At this time, too, the boarders who had been out in search of amusement in the town were returning disappointed up the avenue. It had been calculated that if the Staff could join one of these parties, they would be free from suspicion while they watched their snares. Of course they were all four there; they met several ill-humoured

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

friends from among the boarders a little way down, and joined company with them.

They arranged it so that they should not cross the market-place till just at the time named. And truly, gracious powers ! At the top of the market-place, just a little to the right of the avenue, at that moment appeared *Karen Lote* ; no one could mistake her erect figure, her grey cloak, and the feather in her hat. The four had so little expected to meet *her*, that if the boarders had not been so sulky and tired, they would have noticed their embarrassment. Could it really be Karen Lote !

She turned back to the left ; it was patent to all the world that she had come here to wait for some one.

They looked from her to each other ; they did not laugh, they did not make a sign—they were frightened.

But there was a revulsion of feeling when they saw the tall drawing mistress come swinging across, and turn into the avenue. She came quickly towards them ; she had been given an appointment there at the same time.

Milla crept behind Tora ; Tora would gladly have got behind some one ; they had to find some excuse to account for their laughter. As the drawing mistress passed them, hurried and excited, they had just contrived to push Tinka into a ditch, which fortunately was dry.

And now they were eager to spy on the two other traps. They went up into the boarders' rooms, whence they could see out over the court-



## THE HUNT

yard; they had given Miss Hall a rendezvous behind the gymnasium, but, unless she were standing absolutely still behind it, she had not come. It did not fare much better with their flight across the garden towards the right, where they had given the language teacher rendezvous; they met her, certainly, coming down the path, but it was with several others; running quickly up from the wood, she never so much as looked round. If she had read the letter, she had taken it as a joke. The four girls slipped through the garden-gate and along the same way; they did not want to meet Karen Lote again.

Something, however, had happened a few hours before, which if it had not been stopped would have brought the whole affair to light, in which case not one of the four would ever have set foot in the school again.

On her return from her walk at about six, Miss Hall, very nervous but very determined, had asked to be allowed to speak to Herr Rendalen. She gave him the letter directly he came in. He took it, read it, held it a little way from him, and began to laugh; and when she took it seriously, he laughed still more, quite uncontrollably at last. Ten minutes later he received a note from Miss Hall, in which she informed him that she should leave by the next steamer. On this he rushed off for his mother, whom he found at last in the cow-house. He explained the whole matter contemptuously to her, declaring that Miss Hall must be mad. Fru Rendalen at once went to her. Miss Hall was greatly exasperated; she cried, and

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

gave confused, hasty explanations, while Fru Rendalen pulled off her spectacles, and rubbed and rubbed them; she could not comprehend it in the least. Perhaps, if we were to talk English, she thought; but it all remained as obscure as ever. Plainly and shortly, what was she angry about? Why did she wish to go? What had happened? What redress did she demand?

She demanded that the culprits should be *punished*.

Nothing more than that! They both set off to the boarders' room, which was now empty; they began to search through the exercise books, portfolios, bookshelves; they wished to find out who it was who was so abominable as to copy Rendalen's handwriting. From thence they went into the class-rooms. That of the senior class stood just as it had been left; for the cleaning day for this room was Thursday, and the evening sweeping had not yet been done. There they carefully collected all the bits of paper which had been thrown away, straightened them out, and examined them; they peeped into exercise books, lesson books, and desks. They must find out who the unhappy person was who imitated Rendalen's handwriting.

*They all did it!*

As soon as the fact became clear that every senior girl in the school had been occupied with *Rendalen* and *Rendalen*, and again *Rendalen*, Miss Hall gave in; at last they both left the school-room—neither of them said a word to the other.

Miss Hall never said anything more about it.

## THE HUNT

But Fru Rendalen talked it over with Karl Vangen. His discourse on Monday had for its subject how wrong it was to do to others, what they would not like others to do to them. This was often the case with young people, "who found great pleasure in discovering the weakness and tender points of others, and playing upon them."

The four dare not look up, but they gave side-glances at the drawing mistress, who chanced that day to be sitting near the laboratory table, facing the others. She rested her long arms on it. Her hands toyed with something standing there, which she looked at intently; but tear after tear rolled down her cheeks, without her making an attempt to dry them. She was quite absent.

All four girls noticed it, and when at the third recreation she was still inconsolable and cried as much as ever. Nora could bear it no longer, but drew her into one of the rooms, and with her arms round her neck whispered, "Pardon, pardon, pardon:" she did not say for what.

They gave each other a confidential hug—regret, sympathy, shamefacedness all mingled together. The poor girl, whom they had befooled out of her most precious secret, was comforted at last by such boundless repentance, such thorough comprehension, such heartfelt devotion.

The same day Tora and Tinka heard what Nora had done; they wanted to do the same, but she forbade them; the poor girl must not on any

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

account know that there was more than one who knew her secret.

Karen Lote was ill ; Rendalen had to take her place, and give some of his work to Miss Hall. All three felt that Karen Lote must not be approached by any one.

How could they have thought of anything so disgusting as what they had done ! And that, too, in the midst of serious discussions on woman's position, on woman's honour and responsibility.

Milla would not talk to the others ; at school she held aloof, and when any one went to see her at home, her door was fastened. They all felt as though a storm were brewing.

That Milla should hold back from them as though *they* were the guilty ones and not she, Nora would not endure ; one day, therefore, they all surrounded her, and asked for an explanation. Milla was offended and tried to get away, but it did no good. She then told them that they had led her into doing what was not right, and she would have nothing more to do with it. The only answer she got was from Nora's great eyes, but she reddened under them. Of course she had taken part in what had been done, she did not deny it ; but she did not wish to feel as ashamed of herself again as she had done during the last few days. The others asked if she thought they had been less ashamed than she ?

Milla now told them, with a slight air of superiority, that in her first fright at Karl Vangen's discourse, she had asked her father if she might

## THE HUNT

accompany him when he went to the South German Baths. He had consented with great pleasure. She could not draw back now, they were to start in a few days.

At first, all the friends felt Milla's coldness in having proposed to go away without telling them. But Milla now felt this herself, for she altered her demeanour from that moment, and tried to do away with the impression. It was *she* now who was most amiable about everything. When the drawing mistress appeared in a very pretty cloak and hat, without any one being able to find out who "the kind friend" was from whom she had received them, it was at once clear to the three friends that they came from Milla. She denied it certainly, but that was all the nicer of her. So the short resentment changed on both sides to a closer friendship during the few days that she still had with them. Her father gave a "farewell dinner," the great event at which was the unveiling of a cake, on the top of which four sugar girls held each other with fingerless hands as they danced round a red flag with "Emancipation" on it; round the plinth was written "The Society." But derision was useless. This same Society gave a farewell entertainment to Milla the next day. All good spirits hovered over this, their last meeting, with its many short speeches, its music and songs—over its whole tone.

A girl of a serious turn of mind recalled that all the pleasure that they had had together during their school year had been begun beside Fru Engel's grave; it was closing with Milla's fare-

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

well entertainment. Milla was touched, quite overwhelmed ; she declared that she was altogether unworthy, she did not deserve the kindness which they showed her ; she was not all they thought her.

Tora came up and embraced her, and they all felt that this was genuine. Tora was grateful for the happiest days of her life ; she whispered this to Milla, which had a good effect. They ended by seeing Milla home ; she took Tora's arm. "Bad times are beginning for me," sobbed Tora.

"But I shall come back again, Tora."

Tinka scolded her for her extravagant way of speaking, it was making the whole thing into a caricature and an absurdity ; but this was not the first time that Tora had done so.

When they said good-bye before Milla's door, Tora ran after her up the steps and into the hall ; she was never satisfied. When inside she took out a box which Milla knew at once—it contained her one ornament ; she had inherited it from her uncle, who had brought it in his youth from California. It was some pieces of rough gold made into a heavy chain, a beautiful piece of work ; she pressed it into Milla's hand ; she had never worn it herself. But Milla would not think of taking it from her, she did not know how she could justify herself to her father if she were to do so ; she refused it decidedly, coldly at last, so that Tora was vexed and ran off. But Milla fetched her in again, held her tightly in her arms, and kissed her. Did she not believe that Milla realised what a great thing it was which she

## THE HUNT

wished to do ? But it was a matter of conscience for Milla to say no. They must not part in this way ; Tora should stay with her, she should stay the night there. And it was so settled. When girls are really fond of each other, they love to sleep together.

The others, who had remained outside, waited a while. As Tora did not rejoin them, they walked on a little way ; they were annoyed with her. They all returned, however, and came quietly through the garden-gate and past the office. A little while afterwards the two friends up in the bedroom heard a subdued chorus of girls' voices under the window, led by Tinka's contralto : they sang "Sleep in peace."

The curtain was half raised ; they saw two figures in white ; two heads—one dark, one fair—looked, nodding and laughing, out.

The whole school was down at the custom-house the next day ; Fru Rendalen, all the teachers, male and female, every one—with the exception of Anna Rogne, who had not been at the meeting the previous day.

There was universal crying, and kissing, and admiration over Milla's travelling dress. The little ones thought they must join in ; they could not cry, but they could kiss. First one little mouth was offered, then two, then five. At last they all insisted on being kissed by Milla, and then sprang back tittering.

The stewardess had all the vases in the cabin, and some dishes as well, filled with flowers. She really toiled over them. Tora, her eyes red with

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

crying, had come with Milla and Consul Engel, and had been the object of all the latter's attentions, but she now kept quite in the background. Milla had to look for her to press her hand for the last time, to give her a last kiss. As the steamer swung round and left the quay, the slender black figure waved her handkerchief to her friends, her veil, which had become loosened, waving with it. In a moment the whole quay was white; the little ones in front, the elder ones behind them, all waved their handkerchiefs. From the steamer, it looked like the foam from a waterfall dashing down into the sea.



## CHAPTER II

### IN THE DOVECOTE

ONE morning in the gymnasium, when the senior class was practising rather reluctantly because the weather was splendid, and two panes were open in the big window that looked towards the mountain, letting the air pour in, laden with the scent of trees and flowers ;—one morning in the gymnasium, just as Miss Hall had joined them, and had, as usual, interrupted the ordinary practice by taking away a few of the pupils for special exercises ;—one morning in the gymnasium, when, as the result of all this, some of the girls had gone over to the window for a moment to give a glance at the hundreds of fruit-trees in full blossom, whose dense masses like an amphitheatre covered the opposite hillside with a single thick crown ;—one morning in the gymnasium, when these same girls could not utilise the moment as fully as they wished, because a number of impertinent young trees had that year shot up in such a marvellous manner, that it was impossible to see the glory of the hillside, except where these young trees allowed it ; nay, worse still, the trees attracted the bees

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

from the hives on the right, and they were more impertinent still, for they buzzed in at the open window, and frightened the girls when they were trying to see out between the trees ;—one morning in the gymnasium, just as all those small labourers in the garden, who in lieu of steel spades, hoes, or forks, use their own small legs, who begin their work at sunrise so as to end betimes, working by no forced contract, but also with no supervision or inspection, through the whole summer and autumn, they and their wives and children feeding at Fru Rendalen's expense, friends with all, except the cat ;—yes, one morning in the gymnasium, just when all these tiny workers—oh, hundreds of them—gathered from all parts, rising high in the air to settle down again and hide themselves in the bushes in every direction, the girls stood looking on in wonderment.

All at once the trees in the wood bowed their heads, and deeply bowed those to the left, in front of the garden, while sand and seeds whirled up in a menacing cloud ; a sudden squall from inland had come over the hill, and without warning drove across from right to left. Almost before it had reached the garden it was no longer the trees, but the wind which possessed the blossom ; every single petal of every opening flower was lifted up, strewn far and wide, and carried away lighter, more lively than the snowflakes, for these are attracted by the earth. Millions and millions of flower wings—a flashing, whirling atmosphere, as of white butterflies, through which patches of

## IN THE DOVECOTE

green appeared like islands in a sea of cloud, like islets in a mirage.

The girls screamed with delight, shouted, and clapped their hands, all exclaiming as this marvel was driven gleaming across the garden.

From the wood came a darker shower in pursuit of it, following the same course; it soon reached the place where the glittering petals had passed; its track was narrower, but its rush heavier and more rapid.

The girls rushed towards the great door, which was half open; they wanted to follow the bright moving mass, the fugitives from the fruit-trees. They forgot that they were in gymnasium dress—besides, at the back of the house it did not matter; they screamed, they jumped. Just then the door was pushed right open from outside; on the steps stood a young man in white trousers and a naval uniform coat and cap. He laughed and bowed, he bowed and laughed. It was Niels Fürst.

Behind him, down in the courtyard stood Kaja Gröndal, who wore a light hat and carried a violet parasol. She looked remarkably smart. She laughed too.

"Is not Elisa here?" asked Fürst. No one in either of the senior classes was called Elisa, no one knew any Elisa in the whole school. "No, not Elisa," he said; "Olava!" There was no Olava in either of the classes. "Olava?" No one knew any Olava in the whole school. He was sure that they all took it for a joke. He looked at them in their gymnasium dress, turning from one to another. He had both hands full of flowers,

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

he had to put the ones he held in his right hand against his breast and press them with his left arm when he wanted to raise his cap. Fru Gröndal was carrying flowers as well; they had evidently just bought them, and having heard that the senior classes were at the gymnasium at that moment, he had wished to see them. "Pardon," he said; "perhaps she was called Petrea, or it may be that she was not here at all." He raised his cap, his light curls seemed to laugh with him, and the girls all laughed till the walls of the gymnasium re-echoed. He sprang down. Fru Gröndal turned and went with him; as they passed round the corner he nodded back at them.

The laughter of the girls sounded round and round the lofty building. They were most of them in a state of excitement, they kept running to each other, asking questions without waiting for an answer; if three of them were standing in a group, others joined them; if some were laughing more than the others, they all rushed in that direction. Two began to dispute, and the dispute increased; one or two more joined in, then several others, all of them at last: the dispute was about the disturber of the dovecote who had been at the door.

Tinka was one of those who was disputing. She was simply shocked at his shamelessness; she looked round for supporters. She thus caught sight of Tora, who was sitting on a bench by the door, as white as a sheet. Miss Hall was attending to her. Tinka sprang across, calling as she did so, "What is the matter?" "What has

## IN THE DOVECOTE

happened?" Tora had continued her gymnastics by herself, for she had become an enthusiastic gymnast, and pursued a special system. As she was at the height of her practising, she caught sight, through the half-open door, of a pair of little birds which were flitting backwards and forwards about a bush. Was any one under the bush? Had they a nest there? Was it only their usual antics? Then she saw Kaja Gröndal's light dress come between her and the bush, a large bouquet and a parasol instead of the birds; a young man in naval uniform, with his hands full of flowers. She did not know him. Kaja just then caught sight of her, and either Tora imagined it or she really did say, "There she is!" The officer looked at Tora and kept his eyes intently fixed on hers, his eyes both laughed and stabbed. Kaja Gröndal tried to hold him back and then fell behind, but he kept advancing, did not even stop at the steps, but came up them and still on, without removing his eyes a single moment from hers. She could not move. The noise by the window, the squall, which lifted Fru Gröndal's veil and threatened to turn her parasol inside out, the waving of the bushes, the whistling in the trees; she saw, she heard, but as if at a great distance. She could not properly understand it, she could not put it together; a strange weakness came over her, especially in her knees—they would not support her.

Just then the girls screamed out, and the whole group flew by to the door, while he pushed it quite open with his foot. She felt as though she

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

were breathing fresh air, as though some one were supporting her trembling limbs ; but so long as he stood there she could not go away, although she longed to do so ; she *must* stay.

It was not until after he had gone that she tried to find the bench, and only when she sat down did she begin to feel ill. She tried to struggle against the feeling ; Miss Hall came to her, and now Tinka as well ; and when Tinka asked what it was, firmly and decidedly, it helped her—she was able to cry. The others came running up, but they became quiet at the sight of the deadly white face. They did not ask a single question.

"She has been doing her gymnastics too violently," whispered Miss Hall.

"She does everything so energetically," added Nora kindly, sitting down beside Tora, and drawing her head towards her.

The others went away ; Miss Hall asked them to do so. One could hear in the little room, where they changed their dress, the sound of their returning merriment—one heard them go away, group after group. Although the dinner-bell was ringing, Tora sat there, with Tinka on one side and Nora on the other, and Miss Hall in front of them. Tora had spoken to them several times, and assured them that she was well again now. They all three believed that she had worked too hard at her gymnastics—she believed so herself ; but she said, "Oh, what an ugly, horrid man !"

The others looked at each other : "Do you mean Niels Fürst ?"

## IN THE DOVECOTE

She did not answer at first: "So that was Niels Fürst?"

A little time afterwards she shivered as if from cold, but she did not give any further explanation. She understood what had happened so far as that the gymnastics had been the cause of it. That, being weakened, he had had a singular influence upon her. She would not say a word about it.

Miss Hall now went away. The two others sat there still: Tora asked them to do so. It was so nice to hold their hands.

## CHAPTER III

### SEPARATED FROM THE OTHERS

By the next day Tora had heard that Niels Fürst said she was "out and away the handsomest girl he had seen in Norway." She would not believe it at first, but she heard it on all sides during the next few days. The next time she met Kaja Gröndal she told her the same thing. Tora knew her through Milla, and always spoke to her. She had so far recovered her usual flippancy that she answered that, "If Lieutenant Fürst had not such bad taste, it would have been embarrassing for the rest of the Norwegian girls."

The summer came in with great heat; every one who could, went into the country, to different places on the coast, or up to the houses on the mountains. As soon as ever the school closed they were off; only a few of the poorer ones remained behind, and Tora among them. Nora went to the Baths with her mother; Tinka's relations were well to do, and had a country house. Anna Rogne was in the town; with Rendalen's help she was preparing herself for the post of history teacher in place of Karen Lote, who was



## SEPARATED FROM THE OTHERS

leaving the school. But Anna was not easy of access, more especially for Tora, on account of her friendship with Milla. Even when, for all that, Tora did go to see her, she found her so occupied and anxious (she was to take the junior classes after the holidays) that Tora became tired of her. Tora was now again living down at the Point with her mother (her father was never mentioned), where she shared an attic with two of her sisters. She lived in a hurry-scurry and disorder, and had a feeling of self-reproach and disgust for herself, which she shook off whenever she could cross the ferry and run up into the wood above "The Estate," or along the road to the right from the market-place, to the "Groves." This was a pleasure-ground in the wood near the road, a large open space with a number of small "groves"—that is to say, levelled patches, sometimes with benches and tables; an elaborate network of paths went in and out among them.

One Saturday afternoon she wished to go there to listen to the band, but on the way to the Fröckener Jensens, where she was going to try to get a companion, she met Kaja Gröndal; she had come into the town to meet her husband, but he had not arrived. "Would not Tora come back with her instead? The steamer left in an hour's time."

Tora had a great weakness for invitations. Within the hour she was back again with a large hat-box, in which she had put her night-things and a white dress.

The next morning, Sunday, she was standing

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

on the terrace before the Gröndals' little country house. On her right were all the flowers from the house, which had just been brought out to have the benefit of the rain—as yet it was only wet fog; behind the garden, on the right, it was drifting among the fir-woods; she could see the nearest trees and a little of the bare hillside lower down towards the sea, a faintly gleaming strip of which, was also to be seen. The fog lay very low, there was not a breath of wind. She could hear the steamer, which had just whistled, away to the left where the pier was; now she could see her passing quickly—a vague outline, a thicker, darker, moving cloud—through the white fog. She did not concern herself further about her, but looked towards the path which led up from the landing-place between this garden and the next. Just opposite was a low yellow railing, a very handsome one, of cast-iron; behind it, some old trees in a garden blotted out by the fog; there, she knew, stood several houses which she could not see from here. One of them was the Wingaards', where there was to be a party to-day.

Who would she meet there? She stood and thought about it. Fru Wingard had been a Fürst; would Niels Fürst be there? She stood thinking. He was in the reserve fleet, which was lying in the Channel.

Why should he not come? It was Sunday; why should he not bring several of the officers with him?

If Tora had known this before she went on board the steamer yesterday, would she have

## SEPARATED FROM THE OTHERS

come? She asked herself the question to-day. Directly she had heard it she had felt a trembling sensation, she felt it at times again to-day; but the disagreeable feeling was gone, oddly enough, she thought. Did she really wish to meet him? She did not want to be disturbed by him—no, nor yet to be looked at as she had been before. But to see him, to be seen by him, if it should so chance? Yes, she did wish that—she wished it very much.

When she went along the terrace, to the steps which led up from the left, she could see quite into the sitting-room, and also, in a looking-glass, whether the door of the inner room, where Fru Gröndal slept, was open. No, it was still shut; so she went back to where she had been before.

She could still follow the steamer—that is to say, a dark moving cloud among the fog which hung on every side. The balustrade of the terrace was wet; she dried her hands, forgot, and put them on it again.

She need not have brought the white dress; it was fine rain now. The birds enjoyed the damp, they were singing all round her. Trees, flowers, and grass enjoyed it too.

She noticed their different scents; one of these carried her thoughts far, far away to a country house near Havre, close by the sea; clear blue air, ships, steamers, a long strip of sand, the lazy wash of the waves upon it; close to the sea a country house, low and grey; there they lived. The narrow gate into the garden was open; she stood there on a stone bench, in a short frock and with bare arms; she could see herself in the

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

long striped stockings which she had admired so much the first time she had put them on ; she peered over the hedge, and the scent of the flowers was wafted to her again and again, just as it was now. It was nearly evening, her uncle would be coming from the town. The path through the gloomy orchard was gravelled—she heard his step.

Here to the left, in the fine rain, she saw an immense umbrella and white trousers below it. It was not raised enough for her to see who was coming ; even now, when the garden-gate had to be opened, it was not lifted, it was only held more forward ; but she knew now that the step on the gravel was coming, not towards the country house at Havre, but here ; it was not her uncle, but—— ?

The umbrella was raised, its owner stood inside the garden. A dark coat, a straw hat, and a very puzzled face were seen ; she felt something of the uneasiness from which she had thought herself free, but as he looked at her it passed off ; just the reverse of what had occurred the last time.

He had evidently not expected to see a dark lady on the terrace, perhaps no one at all, so early in the day. But it was by no means disagreeable to him ; he smiled and raised his hat, there was nothing in his eyes to-day which hurt her. He paused at the steps, the umbrella lay on his right shoulder while he laid his left arm on the balustrade and leaned against it. That was a well-formed hand with the signet-ring on it. He was slight and active ; his head was noticeable for

## SEPARATED FROM THE OTHERS

three things ; a nervous sensuous mouth, which was constantly moving, the lips twitching backwards and forwards, in and out, as though moved by a string—the lips themselves being short and full ; a pair of large eyes, roughish and gentle, though they stabbed when he put his head a little backward and half shut them : excessively curly hair of a golden colour, and long reddish whiskers. As he leaned over the balustrade, there was a repose about him full of careless enjoyment. But this mood was not to be depended upon, nor would one readily do so, for there was something in the head, body, and hands which, behind the gentle, lazy, pliable manner, reminded one of a cat.

Tora both felt and saw this, but to-day it was with more curiosity than fear.

"What an unexpected pleasure to meet you here ; have you been here long ?"

"I came here yesterday evening with Fru Gröndal ; she was in the town."

"Was she, indeed ?"

And the two slipped into a conversation about the journey here, the weather, the place, without having been introduced to each other—a conversation without any other object than to have an excuse for looking at one another. The conversation was in short, disjointed sentences, without colour or calculation, except in so far that the last remark never remained the last.

He stood below and studied her with growing pleasure ; the shape of her head, her features, her manners and expression. The eyes really shone under the long thick lashes—what colour were

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

they? They looked black, but—— And her figure! her neck, arms, complexion, her dark hair, her dress; he put himself quite on one side, he was entirely occupied with her. How long this continued, they neither of them knew—it was a considerable time; he did not wish to disturb himself, she did not wish to disturb him. She saw herself in a living mirror, but the pleasure was not an innocent one, for by degrees it made her feel giddy. She collected herself and broke off the conversation; walked across the terrace to some flowers, and occupied herself with their petals, among which she made havoc. He came slowly up, with his umbrella over his shoulder, drawing his left hand along the balustrade.

“Of course you are going to my sister’s this afternoon?”

“Fru Gröndal will get an invitation for me,” she said.

“Of course; we shall have some dancing—will you give me the first waltz?”

She did not look up. “Will you not dance the first waltz with me?”

She felt through her whole being that she ought not to answer him. “I beg your pardon, I forgot that we had not been introduced; but as you know who my sister is, you must have some idea who I am.”

He smiled and came nearer, always with the big umbrella, and with his left hand gliding along the balustrade. She raised herself, but did not answer. “So there is some agreement about the first waltz?” He said it a little carelessly, in

## SEPARATED FROM THE OTHERS

rather a patronising way, almost as though he were offended.

He put down the umbrella and turned towards the entrance. "Of course Fru Gröndal is at home." He went in. Tora was about to add, "But she is not up." But that would look rather like asking him to stay here. Besides, Fru Gröndal must be so nearly dressed that she could warn him off herself, when she heard him in the sitting-room.

He went in there, but did not come out again. Had Fru Gröndal gone there? No, there was no talking. She went towards the steps and looked into the mirror; the bedroom door was wide open.

Down the steps she flew, and through the garden, away into the wood, out of it again, for it was too wet; and out on to the mountain towards the sea, under the lee of the wood; there she sat down on a large stone. She was trembling: her breast heaved as though it would burst.

"Fröken Holm!" called Fru Gröndal; "Fröken Holm!" She really was dressed, then. That call must be either from the terrace or the garden. Perhaps Fru Gröndal had been out when he went into the sitting-room, that was why there had been no talking. Tora could not collect herself sufficiently to answer Fru Gröndal, and as she had not answered the first time, it seemed to her that she must disregard the other calls as well. Very soon she heard no more.

What time was it? Could he have come to make a call on a lady at that early hour? And to

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

come straight from the landing-place, not to his sister's, but to Fru Gröndal's. What was the time? But she had not her watch with her, she had forgotten it.

There were the white trousers coming up the hill towards her, and the umbrella as well! She was pursued and discovered. "Dear me, did you not hear Fru Gröndal call you?" Tora did not answer. "And you are so wet—without an umbrella too; pray come under mine. Why did you run away?" No answer. "Fru Gröndal has been making egg-flip for us the whole morning."

"Has she really?"

"Yes, really; her husband was to have been here this morning, and he owes me some egg-flip. But he has not come."

"What time is it?"

"What on earth do you want to know for? It is just eleven."

"Just eleven?"

"Yes, see for yourself." He held out a massive American gold watch towards her, opening the case as he did so. She was silent and walked on. As they approached the garden, she asked him how he had found her so quickly. Why, he had seen her footprint in the sand here, and he had drawn his own conclusion. No one would go into the wood when it was so wet, so she must be on the hill.

They eat egg-flip together very merrily; but an hour later Tora was sitting alone in her room, in the attics—she had fastened the door; and at



## SEPARATED FROM THE OTHERS

six o'clock the same evening, as the guests were assembling at the Wingaards', she was on board the steamer, which was returning to the town.

What had happened ? Nothing ! Absolutely nothing ! But like the fog over the landscape, which still hung there, although not so low as in the morning, there lay something over all this, which was vague and puzzling to her. She could not bear to be with Fürst and Fru Gröndal. She could not be natural with them ; everything she said or did seemed preposterous.

She did not therefore venture to go to the party ; the mere thought of waltzing with Fürst made her tremble.

It would not do. There was nothing for it but to fly. She made herself appear terribly foolish, in trying to find reasons for her flight ; such a one as that she had crumpled her white dress in her hat-box, could be answered by a hot iron ; that her mother expected her, presupposed a letter by carrier pigeon.

All the same here she was on board the steamer. It was really an achievement. She was delighted. The rest of the passengers were up on the bridge, or in the deck cabin ; the windows were open. She went forward where there were two or three work-people. She sat down a long way from them. It thoroughly delighted her when the steamer swept past the islets at the entrance ; it seemed as though she were leaving something oppressive.

The evening was fine, notwithstanding the fog ;

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

it was mild, and the rain had ceased. The islands among which they steamed stood out clear, their many tinted hills, the green patches of grass, the gardens and houses—for almost all were inhabited—were seen with unusual distinctness, as well as the people who sat or stood about, and watched the steamer as she passed. Tora thought she would like to live in such a place; she made a day-dream that she did so; she sat there and arranged her house according to her taste—this time 'with great simplicity, that soothed her after what she had left.

All at once the discomfort began again, a feeling of depression, the old sense of insecurity—only a recollection, of course, she thought, and drew a long breath, but she felt impelled to turn round and look behind her.

There he stood on the deck, four or five steps away from her. He bowed and smiled. Deadly white, then crimson, she turned angrily away.

"Come, you must not be angry with me; I would rather go back to the town with you, than dance till five o'clock in the morning. Is that so strange? I am not so contemptible for that, am I?"

He sat down behind her; she knew it, and moved a little way from him.

"Why do you do that now? Of course it is only to talk to you that I have come with you; you can see that."

A feeling of both shame and fear came over her; she was alone now, separate from all the others. She felt as though she could have called

## SEPARATED FROM THE OTHERS

to them by name. Whenever Tora felt how solitary she was, she began to cry.

He noticed it, and in quite another tone of voice he said, "Dear Fröken Holm, you must not misunderstand me ; I do not want to annoy you, anything rather than that. It would give me great pleasure to talk to you, I confess ; may I not be allowed to do so ? Why may I not ?" She did not answer, but she ceased crying.

He slipped into conversation on indifferent topics, and calmed her, lamenting that they had not become acquainted earlier. "The first time I saw you I said to myself—well, no matter what I said, but I had just a little wish to see you again ; it was fulfilled quite unexpectedly to-day ; but we did not have any conversation, you were so strange ; why was that ? Well perhaps you were not strange, but why did you go away ? I might imagine that I was to blame for that. You certainly did not want to go before I came—eh ? You have made me quite curious, I assure you. If I really did drive you away, I should like to hear what I frightened you with ; was it with the big umbrella—by chance ? Ah, now you are laughing ! But why will you insist in travelling about *par tout*, Fröken ? Just tell me that." He moved a little nearer, and she remained sitting ; he chatted and joked without any pause. She once turned half round to look at his roguish face, and then she laughed with him. He was very amusing.

Close by one of the numerous stopping-places was a red house, where a number of young people

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

were gathered round some gymnastic apparatus. A young man and a young woman each held a rope in a "giant's strides." He set off after her with all his strength ; a few steps on the ground, and then a long swing in the air ; then again a few steps, and another long swing. Would he reach her ? Never ! She was the lighter, the more active, and she had undoubtedly stronger legs—she ran trip, trip, trip, trip ; her legs hardly seemed to be apart, and how she flew swinging through the air ! Her hair, her dress streaming after her, a very Iris ! ' Both Fürst and Tora followed this chase, silent but eager. Tora felt his presence at her back, like fire ; he had come nearer ; and, turning abruptly, she went into the cabin and sat down among the others. He was standing on the landing-place when she went on shore at the Point ; he offered her his hand, but she turned away ; he wanted to carry her box, but she ran off. He went on board again to go up into the harbour.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE HUNT

TORA reached home about the same time as her father, who had been out sailing with some friends. He was helped on shore, and his reception at home was warm. The children fled, Tora locked herself into the attic, and dare not even go down to supper, although she was hungry. She had to open the door at last for her sisters; she soon began to quarrel with them, they had been wearing her best shoes and had almost spoiled them. It ended in one of them flinging the shoes at her, and they came to blows over it. Complaints followed, which brought the angry mother upstairs. Tora cried herself to sleep like a child.

The next day she tried to help her mother in the house, not without some hard words and sarcasms about such fine elegant ladies only being in the way. Still she set her will to the task of being a help to her mother, especially in mending the clothes. She gave what she could from her little annuity, so that they were on fairly friendly terms; but it seemed to Tora that she had a right to have some time to herself. A little while before

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

supper, she would take the ferry across to the other side and go up either into the wood above "The Estate" or into the "Groves." There was no peace at home. Whether she went to the wood or "The Estate," she always landed at Bommen, and went up that way, though it was not exactly the most direct one ; but she did not know a prettier place in the town than the house in the large garden there, so she gave herself the pleasure of looking at it every day.

Both house and garden had belonged to the Wingaard family, but they had exchanged them for the Fürsts' house in the market-place, where the Wingaards carried on the Fürst business. The brother-in-law, Niels Fürst, therefore now owned the house in the large garden at Bommen.

Tora passed it with a little apprehension, although the man she dreaded was certainly not there, but on board his ship. This became a change and occupation, and formed, as it were, an incident in her walk.

Every time it was over, she went more carelessly up to the wood, or out to the "Groves." In a little Norwegian town like this, all the girls go about as they like. She met others and joined them, or went on by herself; generally she wished to be alone for an hour or two ; she went, as a rule, to some particular spot, and when there took out her book, if she had one, or else she wove day-dreams without the aid of books. Or else, and this was now almost always the case, she wrote long letters, one every day, about any curious experience. She had her portfolio with

## THE HUNT

her and an ink-bottle in her pocket ; she lay on the grass with the portfolio on a stone, or she sat on a stone with the portfolio spread out on her lap and the ink-bottle by her side. That did splendidly: true open-air letters, where the words seemed to fly before the wind, and every varying thought found ready utterance. And how delightful it was in the thicket, just dappled by the sunbeams, enlivened by the twittering of the birds, a little startled by the rustle of a squirrel in the boughs! The distant sounds from the harbour, from the works by the river-bank, the voices in the "Groves" and on the road, with every now and then a strain of music, only made the silence of the place where she was sitting the deeper. This was her one bit of summer poetry. As soon as she opened her eyes in the morning, she began to long for it; the noise and quarrelling in the house passed by her as though they did not concern her—it was here that she lived. Her great expedition to Fru Gröndal, and her remarkable return home in the steamer, were of course recorded up here in letters to Milla, Nora, and Tinka; on the fourth day, she read over the work of the three previous ones; she was very pleased, she knew she had successfully varied the theme. She became, however, somewhat thoughtful as she read the first letter, for she remembered the others, and the difference had become by degrees too great. If the girls were by chance to compare them, one of those tiresome scenes might easily result when she would have to pay the reckoning. No, she would have no more of that. In the first

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

letter she had treated the matter seriously, described her confusion, her blunders, her fright ; no one who read it could doubt that she had been with a person of whom she had been frightened. In the second letter she made fun of herself, of him, and the whole affair. In the third, she described how a maiden with dark hair was wandering on a foreign strand, when a merman rose from the sea who had fair whiskers and curly hair. In her terror, the dark maiden fled on board a ship, to return to her own country. But the merman swam after the ship the whole way, with his hand on his heart ; when she got to land he gave a wail of sorrow, she heard it still in her dreams at night.

She tore up all the letters, and did not write any others.

Still she continued her walks. She had not the slightest idea that Niels Fürst had returned to the town, that a friend had taken his duty for him, and that he was quietly studying languages to prepare himself for a new career, more brilliant than his earlier one, and that he was living in his own house. Still less did she know that on the first day of his return to the town he had seen her, in the looking-glass fixed outside his window, look shyly across at the house as she passed, and that he saw the same thing happen the next day. He knew that this was not the shortest way up to the wood, which was where she went the first day, or out to the "Groves," where she had gone on the second ; on both occasions he had put on his hat and gone out, the third day he sat ready to follow



## THE HUNT

her ; now he thought he understood    He knew something about girls who will and will not ; they acted exactly in this way.

To-day she came as usual, glanced apprehensively across, and strolled on with her portfolio under her arm. Some one stopped her, and she thus chanced to look round and so detected him. He was already advancing quickly ; he was in pursuit, he had struck the trail.

She said good-bye, and as soon as she could do so unobserved, she quickened her ordinary pace to the quickest of which she was capable. She was frightened, unaccountably frightened. Perhaps it would have been wiser to have turned back, but to-day she could not endure his gaze, and there was no one else about. So she walked on, and on, and on, but suspected that he was gaining on her—she almost knew it. She dare not run on the high-road, but she trusted to the fact that she was more at home in the "Groves" than he was, and that she could slip away. She therefore left the road and made her way through the wood ; she saw to her terror that he plunged into it as well, so she ventured to run up the hill, but in the direction from which he came ; then she stooped down behind a large stone. She was quite successful, for almost directly afterwards she saw him pass by a little below the place where she crouched, her heart beating as though it would burst her dress. Here, where no one could see him, he ran, he climbed, he jumped—nothing checked his straight upward course. She waited till he was out of sight, and then ran

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

off through the wood in the opposite direction from that in which he had gone ; she did not stop till she found herself far above "The Estate" on a rock under a fir-tree, with leafy trees all round, and, while hot and panting she looked round her, thinking how wonderful the view was which she took in in a rapid glance, he rose before her mind's eye as he had looked when he hurried past the stone. He was horrible ! That man could do anything !

After that, she could never get rid of him. It was always he, nothing but he ; or rather every moment of the day she fled from him, but he always reappeared.

Her sisters reported to her that he hung about the house and looked in ; walked past and looked in, talked to them, asked them to remember him to her. This immensely excited them, they were proud of it ; his remark that Tora was "the handsomest girl" had reached them too. But Tora's terror increased ; she was pursued. She knew that he would not give up.

Where could she go to ? None of the Rendalens were at home. She could go to them after the holidays, but nearly three weeks still remained. She could not speak to any one else, she was too much ashamed. She did not think once of shoemaker Hansen, but Fru Hansen was severe, she would not exactly understand. Her mother she never once thought of. But after all it was a thing which entirely concerned herself ; she need be in no man's power if she did not choose.

## THE HUNT

No, but when she could not by any means get him out of her thoughts ?

On Saturday evening she had flung herself upon her bed, as weary as though she had passed the day in the hardest manual labour. She lay there and looked at the yards of a ship which was being towed past. She watched the folds in the loosely hanging sails which were swaying in the wind. The vessel was so near that she could almost have touched her. Outside there was a heavy sea, the storm driving the swell up into the harbour : she, too, longed to find a haven ! It was Saturday evening, to-morrow she would have to go to church. Karl Vangen's face smiled to her as she remembered this, and she felt happy before she fell asleep. If he had been a girl she would have gone to him—just to *him*—with the trouble which oppressed her.

The next day she occupied a seat at the furthest end of the church. Karl Vangen had met her, and said how nice it was that she was coming up to them again to help Fru Rendalen. On account of this remark she had chosen the most remote seat ; she did not feel sure that she might not begin to cry.

She did not, however ; there was something soothing in the church and the stillness and the people, which was unlike the summer day outside. But when Karl Vangen went into the pulpit, and his prayer was the one which he had used on her first school-day—that on meeting, almost word for word the same—it disturbed her : that even Karl Vangen's prayer should be a lesson from earlier

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

days. This little coincidence occupied her, and she did not follow him. She gathered that the sermon dealt with conversion, and that Karl Vangen, as was his custom, illustrated what he was saying by examples from real life. But she had heard these examples at school, every one of them.

She was roused by the name of John Wesley. His conversion, Vangen considered, was the most thorough, the fullest in every particular, that he knew of. He related it, and then passed on to give examples of sudden conversions, especially some by Wesley himself; other natures with different pasts, with different kinds of knowledge, influenced by other fears. He wished to speak of these sudden conversions separately to-day. He had known a young girl who had a burning desire for grace for her sins, which she could by no means obtain, until one day she saw Rubens' picture of the Crucifixion, and Mary Magdalene standing with long flowing hair at the foot of the cross. She would be Mary Magdalene. And all at once it was a joy to her to imagine herself at the foot of the cross in the place of Mary Magdalene; her thoughts dwelt on this so powerfully that it seemed as though she, and no one else, stood there. At once she received the knowledge that it was for *her* that Jesus was crucified, *her* sins were forgiven. She was seized with a great, great joy. The preacher knew several such examples, especially among women. They had clung so persistently to some single incident in the life of Jesus, some single word of His, something special in the mystery of grace, and had gazed upon it until

## THE HUNT

it had the effect of a strong light, a special knowledge. From that time all became clear to them, their sins were taken from them ; their will became stronger from that day and hour.

Tora did not hear more, least of all that it was *against* this that Vangen wished to speak. Then and there her mind was occupied with an attempt to follow these examples. His too familiar voice murmured on ; everything round her seemed to fade away. She saw Jesus on the cross in a strange country, with driving black clouds above Him, each height, each valley, each tree veiled and mourning. She saw His eyes close, His chest rise and fall, and it all became night. She felt her own small sorrows hidden in that awful moment. How long she remained in this condition she did not know. The sermon was not over, she could not therefore go ; but she could not listen, she did not desire to do so.

When at length she left the church she had only one wish—to be able to renew that vision as soon as she could.

Through all these days she had not been outside the door, she must go this afternoon. From fear of Frst she went over towards the mountain, and from there up into the wood along by the churchyard, and then on to the big fir-tree on the right, and sat down on the stone under it—it was smooth and flat. She had not come to dream or to enjoy herself, but for real help to consecrate her life. These weary days had enlightened her ; she knew now that her character combined a little of everything ; that she wished

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

for a little of everything, even of what was wrong, so that she would be an easy prey for a rogue. She had not been sufficiently guarded from the first; she had been completely unprepared—nay, the danger had had something attractive in it.

This must now be changed; she would do any kind of work, if only it would be a restraint on her. She had no more ambition now, nothing but dread.

She fell upon her knees, and with her blood coursing the faster from her hurried ascent, she offered her prayer in her abasement. It was the most humble, piteous pleading. Her distress was extreme. Power to resist the will which conquered hers! She did not doubt for a moment that her petition would be instantly and literally granted.

Mentally she saw herself endowed with strength, she saw herself without fear—even with a mission; no matter what it was, so that it continued. And that should regulate her life. Willingly! Always! She could not picture to herself greater joy, honour, or riches than to give herself to some hard task; it was her nature to wish for extremes.

And now she began to contemplate herself—no, she came to a stand, her mind was disturbed when she thought of her friends. Milla's greatest anxiety in her last letter had been lest the weather should not continue fine, and Nora had feared that they might forget to send her some new music. Why should she alone, who was

## THE HUNT

hiding here, have such dreadful trouble? Her desolate position ought to have made people pity her, but it only encouraged them.

She sat, turned away from the view, leaning against the big fir-tree. Before her she saw alder woods, nothing but young luxuriant alder woods, and fronds of bracken in a thick mass. Ah! how impotent all that was, that they had discussed together at the Society's meetings, and at other places. Only a few weeks ago, and now she must hide herself here. If this became known, she would no doubt lose the small status she had gained for herself. She would hardly go again to the Engels, she would not be allowed to be Milla's friend, perhaps not be able even to go up to Fru Rendalen's again; she began to cry, but she tried to collect herself. The image of the sly, excited, accursed face that she had seen from behind the stone down below, seemed to stab her—to thrill through her; she understood that the dread with which she terrified herself was greater danger to her than the actual man.

She ought to have gone home again, but it was a shame not to test her strength, and so she stayed there.

As Tora, a short time before, was climbing the hill, Niels Furst was sauntering up and down the deck of a vessel, the captain of which he knew, and just as she reached the flat stone under the fir-tree he had taken up the new ship's telescope to try it; he focussed it and turned it towards the river-bank, and from there gradually upwards

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

across the wooden slopes. Tora had just seated herself on the stone as the telescope was turned to that point, and he recognised her.

He took a short cut across the market-place, and turned up to the right of "The Estate" gardens.

Latterly he had thought of nothing but her, he could not occupy himself, and he slept badly. He had never been in pursuit of so beautiful a girl before.

Although day after day she passed his house, she constantly eluded his pursuit, and all his efforts were still fruitless. All that was needed was to find her in her hiding-place; one could not do her a greater service. Nay, the oftener she hid herself, the greater would be the refinement of her pleasure in being discovered. Now he understood why she had left Fru Gröndal's that day—now he saw why she had cried on board the steamer. Ah, these little girls! But the pursuit would become wearisome if it continued much longer. His own credit was at stake as well; no one must suppose that they could befooled *him*. His character, too, would be safer when this was all settled; she would be silent then. If only she did not see him too soon, if he could only get near enough to hold her with his eyes!

Notwithstanding his intense excitement, he advanced skilfully, not by the path, but straight up through the wood under cover of the leaves. He scrambled where he could not walk, he climbed where he could not scramble. She sat there, searching for some definite idea which might be extended until it entirely occupied and



## THE HUNT

engrossed her mind ; but she was not successful—there was something which always distracted her. Just then a branch snapped down below. She had constantly felt tempted to turn round. Was there really anything behind her? She looked down below her. At first she saw nothing ; yes, the branches moved and she heard the leaves rustle. That might be a horse or cow from "The Estate" ; they came up here for pasture. All the same, she felt very hot ; she wanted to get up and go away ; but her eyes continued fixed on the branches below, there was something dark beneath them. A head pushed its way through, a man—*he!* How in the world——? Did he know that she——? How did he come to——? She bewildered herself with useless, frightened questions. He looked up. With all her power she raised herself, though her feet felt as heavy as lead ; but she did not turn from him, or attempt to go away, and by degrees she lost the desire to do so. Now there was only the stone between them, a wave of terror swept over her and roused her ; she turned her head now, staggered a few steps—and met him. She leaned forward, he took her hand, his arm slipped under hers—she felt as though a burning band were round her. She fell so unexpectedly and so heavily that he nearly fell with her.



## VI

# WHAT FIDELITY WILL SAY

### CHAPTER I

#### HAPPINESS

"DEAR NORA,

"I know beforehand that this will not be a regular letter, I have no time for one. I almost think that you had better not show it to the others, they will hardly understand my feelings. Last, but not least, there is something which divides the others from us two; I feel that instinctively. If only I could do away with some of what I—feel, I had almost written again. You must know that I have passed the greatest, the most beautiful, the most enchanting day in my life.

"Ah! now you are curious. I will not bother you, but all the same I must begin with how and why I came to do so.

"When we arrived at Copenhagen, who should meet us at the station but Niels Fürst! Of course it had been arranged between him and papa. I saw that at once, but papa is so clever at keeping a secret. Do you know where Niels Fürst came from? From Sofiero. Yes, now it is written, and you understand the whole thing. I told you that, long ago, papa had had the honour of being

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

invited by his Majesty to come and see Sofiero the next time he went abroad. There are not many Norwegians to whom that has happened, so it was very flattering to papa.

"He had said nothing to me; he did not wish to make me nervous before the time, he said. Fürst came straight from Sofiero—fancy, he is perhaps to be made orderly officer to the prince who is a sailor—his Royal Highness Prince Oscar, that is to say. Fürst told us at what time the train would leave the next day. Good heavens! actually the next day. We were expected, then! I was not allowed to make any toilette, I was to appear just in my travelling dress, as papa was to do as well. That naughty Lieutenant Fürst—you know he is related to us—he calls me cousin, though I am not one. He said I was pretty enough as I was. Do you know him?

"It was now a question of getting some sleep after the journey—one does not look well when one has not slept. I have never struggled so hard to go to sleep before. I was terribly startled, you see. I thought about the stupidest things in the world. Do you remember chief custom-house officer Jacobsen's nose? I lay and stared at his nose, till I really fell asleep thinking of it and of the town bailiff; and I can tell you I was so tired, that when I was once asleep, I slept like a top. I was, thank goodness, none the worse when I got up. But it was awful, really awful later on. You have never been in such circumstances, so perhaps it may seem odd to you that the more I thought of the important moment, and that I had no lady to

## HAPPINESS

refer to (men can never tell one anything, and so they laugh), the more terrified I became. It was rather a cold morning, and one thing with the other, the cold and the fright—Fürst called it cannon fever—I was most miserably uncomfortable. It was dreadfully silly ; at last I could not altogether conceal it. You understand. But I consoled myself with the thought that I was not the first girl to whom this had happened, when she was to be presented at Court. I was really quite ill at last, and therefore have hardly any impression of the journey, or what we talked about. For all that, I got into a dispute. Fürst said that all the monarchies were trying to gather the wealthy classes about themselves against the lower classes. That seems to me to be too bad. Is the monarchy meant to protect itself? I thought it was to protect the lower classes, and I said so too. Papa began to tease me about the Society and school, and Karen Lote's history lessons ; you can hear him, can't you ? Fürst asked who was to protect the wealthy classes in that case ? They must protect themselves, I should suppose. At all events, it is wicked of them to betray the lower classes, is it not ?

"Oh, how enchanting Oresund is ! When we crossed (I forgot to say that we came there, that is, to Helsingör, by railway) you see what I am to-day. . . . No, I will pass that altogether, or I shall never be ready. Father wants me to go out with him this morning, you will soon see why. I will begin with the Palace, which can be seen from the Sound ; it is magnificently situated, but

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

is not so large as we had expected. So at last we arrived at Helsingborg. There, now you *will* be astonished—a royal carriage was waiting for us. Both papa and Fürst took it as a matter of course, but I am certain that they were at least as astonished as I was.

"The carriage was just like any other ; it is the livery which is the important point. But I was in the most deadly terror how it would all go off. The weather had, however, become delightful. I was obliged to leave them for a moment before we got into the carriage.

"You can imagine how upset I was by it all, when I tell you that I perspired through my gloves. Of course I had another pair to put on when I got there. Papa drove me to despair by saying, 'My dear child, how wretched you look.' I really believe I had tears in my eyes, for Fürst, who was opposite to me, began to try to amuse me, but I hardly heard what he said. But still through it all I noticed that the formation was a mixture of sandstone and coal strata, and that there was a lot of iron in the rocks. I thought of Rendalen and his maps and collections. You cannot imagine how all this passed through my mind in the midst of my fright. If any one would have taken me home again, at the price of every pretty thing I possess, I would have accepted the offer, I can assure you. We drove through a little wood, and came out into a great open quadrangle—the Palace.

"When I saw the quadrangle and the grass there—how do things come into one's head?—I

## HAPPINESS

remembered so distinctly the lesson at school when I learned that *bowling-green* meant in English just such a place as this; and that Fru Rendalen came into the class at the moment and asked why it was called a bowling-green? and that Tora whispered it to me. How cleverly Tora could do such things! I have no further recollection of where we drew up. I got out of the carriage, when a very grand gentleman met us, and gave me his arm. We were shown to some rooms. A lady came with me, thank goodness. I was not myself till that moment. I looked at myself in the glass. What a fright I was! I saw that at once in papa's face when we met in a sitting-room. Fancy, I never noticed in what direction we went or where the room was. Guess where we were going to. Into the garden, where we were to lunch with their Majesties. There could not have been greater condescension to the townsfolk of a little Norwegian town, could there? Do you remember how we dressed our dolls for a Court ball? The same gentleman—Fürst does not remember his name, but I believe he was a gentleman-in-waiting—escorted me and said something to me in Swedish. I could not understand him, my wits were wool-gathering.

"No one could have been in a greater state of mind. When I saw the garden and came into it—it all whirled round me, trees, people, table, servants, chairs—the awful fright I was in almost made me drop. I used all my strength, I can assure you. The gentleman whose arm I had, must have felt my hand tremble, or have read my

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

trouble in my face ; he told me not to be frightened, their Majesties were so charming. I understood that.

"Oh dear, and how wonderfully good they were ; especially the King. Oh, that smile, the shape of the hand, those eyes ! It was a perfect ocean of goodness—but more than goodness. There is something, especially in the eyes, which fascinates one. I will use the word heaven rather than ocean to describe those eyes, for then you can better understand what the Swedes call *tjusande*.\* There is no word in Norse for it. Yes, *tjusande* ! Only southern people have such eyes. How cold and egotistical we are, I must say it, when we look at them. At all events, I feel it so.

"Now you shall hear something wonderful : from the time—I may say from the very second—in which his Majesty's eyes rested on me, I felt well again. Well, did I say ? I felt this look fill and warm my whole being. I felt it—it is strange, is it not ? but on my honour it is true—I felt it in my knees ; yes, in my knees. There is only one word in our language which can fully express my state of mind ; I am almost in the same state now, merely with telling you about it, the others would not understand me. I was in a state of *beatitude*. Perhaps it is profane, or at least wrong, to use this word in such a sense, but it is *true*.

"What do you think the King said ? 'Welcome to my house, Fröken,' in the prettiest, sweetest Norse I ever heard.

\* Enchanting.



## HAPPINESS

"The Queen smiled. She asked me what town I came from. The King answered for me.

"What is the clergyman called?" asked the Queen.

"Karl Vangen," I said; but that was stupid; I ought to have mentioned the Dean's name or that of one of the elder clergy. At the same time the King welcomed my father, who stood there with Fürst, and said to him, 'I think the lieutenant has excellent taste.' That is exactly what he said, word for word; I have often thought of it since, for it evidently showed that Niels Fürst had spoken about me in these high places. I did not know that they would trouble themselves about anything so insignificant.

"We then went to table, the same elegant gentleman took me. 'Well?' said he in Swedish, and I hastened to answer that I was enchanted. 'Every one is,' he assured me. We did not sit down, but walked about as we liked, and first one and then another came up and was presented to me. Only think! one of them was a Count, another a Baron, then a Countess, a Baroness, and a Master of the Horse: he in particular came and walked about, and talked continually.

"It was not exactly what they said, but their whole style and manner had something incredibly intellectual and winning. But there was something as well in the place and surroundings which helped, for I felt as though I were not on earth.

"The servants themselves made me feel uneasy and small, they gave me the impression of being

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

so careful, so attentive, of knowing so well how everything should be.

"I did not always do things right. We Norwegians do not learn anything. No, there was a nobility, a beauty and kindness, and it was all so bright and yet so stately; none of the Princes were there, though. What we had to eat (I hardly touched anything) I can say by heart, for I wrote it down in my diary, and I will copy it for Tora; that and the furniture of the castle, and a thousand other things which you do not care about. You do not understand anything about nice dishes, but I arrange it so as to tell you all the more intellectual things, and you must not show it to any one. My word, if you do! Nora, you don't know, but I must have one confidente, or happiness would be a burden. I have never felt as I have done yesterday and to-day. I am quite upset. I will write to Tora about my dress. Of course I have a new one, which I think would have surprised you all, although there is not much to be done in black. Still I think it suits me. I got a glimpse of myself in several mirrors at the castle, for you must understand that we were shown over it. On the side where we came in first, to the left, is the great apartment where the royal entertainments are held in all their grandeur. Ah! if one could only be present. This room is decorated in white, with an arabesque on a blue ground, and great big pictures, one by Markus Larsson, full of sunlight, but I don't know what it is, it is so extraordinary; and divans and chairs in blue silk—an

## HAPPINESS

enormous chandelier of different coloured glass, magnificent! Near the wall two black figures, dressed in red and gold, holding lamps, real works of art. A huge marble fireplace, the shape we call '*Pies*,'\* but the word is so ugly; and a richly gilded clock and porcelain vases; a particularly noticeable flower-stand in Japanese porcelain, very curious. Also a Chinese or Japanese writing-table made of black wood, with gold ornaments. But that was in the cabinet.

"But no; I will scratch out about the cabinet. You shall read all about it in Tora's letter. I will just tell you that you look out from the great balcony over the Sound, and see all the ships and steamers, and Helsingborg and Krongborg. There is not a view like it in the North. How should there be? Do you think we did not go into the bedrooms? I don't know if that were right, but we did. I really have to restrain myself from telling you about them at once, and about their Majesties' sitting-rooms. Imagine white silk hangings over both walls and ceiling, with a light red border, in the Queen's room. And such a writing-table! The King's rooms were so nobly simple. On the pillow in the King's bedroom I saw two hairs—you know what sharp eyes I have. I lagged a little behind, and took them without any one noticing it. I put them into the case of my watch. But this reminds me of the great event. When we went into the garden again, the light fell very strongly right on the gate, and I saw something written on the railing. I went

\* Open hearth.

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

up to it ; it was in French, and undoubtedly by a lady. . . . Yes, you see I have scratched that out again. For when one has made up one's mind not to repeat a thing, it shall not be repeated. It was horrid. I rubbed it out with my finger ; but I had to be quick, and I got a splinter into my finger, through my glove, and made it bleed. So I rubbed it out with my blood. I have not said a word to any living being about it until now, nor must you tell it to any one. To papa I said I had pricked my finger while I was trying to gather a rose.

"If any one should have seen me—but they were looking at something in the garden ; or if any one had seen what was written before I did ? Is it not extraordinary ?

"The royal party and their attendants were no longer in the garden, but the gentleman who had met us now joined us. As he did not show any intention of taking us to the others, papa asked him to convey our respectful thanks to their Majesties, and we then left the garden. The carriage came up again, and my elegant cavalier handed me a beautiful bouquet from the royal garden. What do you think of that ? It is before me as I write. The flowers are of the Swedish and Norwegian colours. To be sure, Fürst says they are the commonest flowers, but I thought there was more meaning in it than that. I especially admire a lily and a rose. I put a few forget-me-nots into my letter, for I must tell you, my dear Nora, that I am not coming home again. I hope this will be nearly as great an astonish-

## HAPPINESS

ment to you as it was to me, when papa told me this morning. I am to go to Paris to learn French thoroughly.

"'Is that a determination he has only lately come to, or why did he not tell me before?' you will naturally inquire.

"You must know that we start to-morrow. What do you think of that? Papa cannot spare the time to remain away longer.

"'But why did we not go direct?' you ask again. I asked the same thing, although, Heaven knows, I would not have missed yesterday for the world.

"Papa answered that he came to the determination yesterday. Lieutenant Fürst drew his attention to the fact that all well-bred Swedish ladies speak French as well as they do Swedish, and that all Germans and Russians know it; besides which, every well-educated woman ought to speak French like her mother tongue.

"It is not disagreeable to me to travel. To be sure, it will be for at least a year that I shall be separated from you all, but we shall have all the more to tell each other when we meet again.

"There is one thing I must ask you about. Lieutenant Fürst says that—— I had got so far when father came in this morning, and I had to hide my letter. He took me out all in a hurry. We are only just home again this evening, and do you know what for? To pack up and start at once. A fresh determination! Lieutenant Fürst will give father the pleasure of coming with him. I shall put my letter just as it is into the letter-

### THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

box at the station. I suspect that if I were to read it through again you would not get it.—  
Your loving

“MILLA.”

Nora and her mother had left the Baths when the letter got there. It was forwarded to Christiania, where they were staying. When Nora returned she found a telegram, dated from Hamburg, which ran : “Do not read the letter which is coming; send it me, ‘Hôtel Continental, Paris.’” But the letter had been already read.

## CHAPTER II

### A MISFORTUNE

Soon after the beginning of the term Miss Hall began a series of lectures for the ladies of the town; it had become the fashion to hear a little of all the objectionable things which their daughters and sisters had learned about in the past year. The lectures were held twice a week in the great laboratory, which as a rule was full. Most of those who had been in the senior class the previous year, and had now left, attended these lectures. One day late in October, when they were assembling in the lecture-hall, Tora came in, accompanied by her friends. There was general astonishment and greeting. Where had she been? Why was she so pale? And, good gracious, how thin! It was true, then, that she had been ill. Was it in the west country that she had been staying? When had she returned to the town? Would she live up here now?

The conversation ceased as Fru Rendalen and Miss Hall came in, and those who were not seated turned to find places. But it was soon seen that there were not sufficient seats; the crowd

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

had never been so great, for Miss Hall was lecturing upon certain phenomena of the nerves which had till now been overlooked or denied, and the lectures became more interesting every time.

To gain space, the large double door leading to the entrance-hall was opened, the outer door being closed. A number of chairs were placed in the hall, and two rows as well in front of the laboratory table. Fru Rendalen's commanding voice was heard giving directions, till quiet was obtained. Tora and her friends found places at the furthest end of one of these rows of chairs.

Miss Hall took up her subject where she had broken off at the last lecture.

"The health and morality of mankind demanded that woman's nerves should be strengthened. It was not enough that she should feel physically comfortable, her will must be ripened by knowledge; she must have an aim in life which will not readily allow her to remain the mere slave of another human being." In a professional manner she ran shortly through what she had said before, for the benefit of those who had not been present.

"People with weak nerves, and especially those of an hysterical temperament, can by certain mechanical operations be brought into a 'hypnotic,' 'somnambulistic,' or 'magnetic' condition. This condition was impotence combined with consciousness; we did, while in this state, what he wished who had brought us into it. We were his prey, and that not only while we slept, but afterwards when we were awakened—we absolutely obeyed the commands we had received while



## A MISFORTUNE

we were in this condition." Miss Hall reminded her hearers of one or two examples she had given.

"In this state certain mediums could visit other places, read the thoughts of others, both near and far. Some few could even see into futurity.

"This fact could no longer be denied, nor could it be explained. At one time it was believed that this result was dependent on belief; now it is known that belief has nothing to do with it. *Certain people could bring themselves* into this abnormal condition, some by great exertion, others merely by wishing it. They all accomplish this—with whatever object—by fixing their minds upon some single thing, either in their thoughts or in the exterior world.

"Most of us know a little of the effect of doing this, but only those with weak nerves and in certain conditions can bring themselves by it into a state of excitement and abstraction. Many conversions have taken place by this means, especially among women. In this way we come to-day to what is the most dangerous for women. Some people have the power of bringing others, and especially women, into this condition without the ordinary mechanical means, without approaching them, without any movement, merely by a look. They can force people to look at them, and, with their eyes on theirs, command their will."

Miss Hall related a story which she had heard of a very celebrated singer. One day she was in a railway carriage; the train had just stopped, and she was looking out of the window furthest from the platform, when she felt an uncomfortable

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

sensation, felt constrained to turn round; she met the gaze of a pair of eyes which seemed to stab her, and which looked straight into hers. She hurried out at once and changed compartments, but the man followed her; he was probably aware of his power and wished to use it. The lady found her *Impresario*, and begged him to free her "from those green eyes." It was done, but she felt certain that otherwise she would have been lost. "Now the Prima Donna happened to be conscious of her own weakness, but how many are so? More especially if touch is added to the power of the eyes, they are lost. A man who does not know what it is, takes it naturally for a desire for more, and acts accordingly. But this need not be so. I dare assert that many a woman who has fallen is as guiltless as an unconscious child."

A chair is overturned—something heavy and soft falls to the ground; other chairs are pushed aside, and exclamations are heard from several of the audience as they hastily rise.

Every one now got up, those behind standing on the forms. Through all the bustle they heard the words, "Stand back!" It was Fru Rendalen's voice. Those who were standing on the benches could not contrive to see anything, and questioned those before them in whispers. Only those quite near saw what it was, and they made no answer, nor did they move till Fru Rendalen and one or two others had lifted up an inanimate form which Fru Rendalen carried out in her arms—it was Tora. "Stand back!" was heard again.

Miss Hall followed her, then Nora, Tinka, and

## A MISFORTUNE

Anna Rogne, and then several others. Miss Hall hurried forward as soon as they were in the hall, and opened the door of Fru Rendalen's sitting-room; she went quickly in, and arranged a cushion on the sofa, while Fru Rendalen laid down her burden with Nora's assistance. Miss Hall turned to all those who were standing round and asked them to leave the room; as soon as Fru Rendalen could raise herself she sharply repeated the request. They all went away. Outside in the hall they encountered a stream of people coming from the laboratory—every one was curious; others came from the class-rooms, which were opening one after the other. But Nora, who had grown deadly white, took upon herself to stay. When her unhappy friend began to show signs of life she was seized with a fearful suspicion. She ran forward and fastened the doors leading to the two passages. It was hardly done when she heard Tora call out, "Yes, yes, that happened to me! Oh yes." And a fit of despairing crying followed. It sounded through the passages. Supposing any one outside should hear it? Nora flew into the inner passage, meeting the stream of people; she did not clearly know how she could hinder them from coming near the doors. She never knew how she got through the crowd of grown people and children; how she gathered voice and courage to call out that they must not go on, they must all come back again. She mounted the tribune and rapped loudly with a ruler. They came streaming in from all quarters. She rapped again, and every

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

one was quiet. She said: "Tora Holm has had nervous fever. The air in here was too close, and what was said frightened her, and—and—and—oh yes, Miss Hall is coming directly."

She made this last assertion because she did not know what else to say. She rushed away so as not to burst into tears while she was in the room.

Miss Hall, however, could not come, and at last Fru Rendalen had to go in and mount the tribune.

"I must beg your indulgence. Miss Hall is obliged to remain with the invalid. I must partly take the blame on myself for what has happened. Fröken Holm, being so unwell, ought never to have sat in this crowd. I ought also to have noticed her sooner, but I was entirely engrossed in the lecture. It often happens that we who are occupied in teaching allow ourselves to be too much taken up with it." Her voice trembled—she was as white as her own cap; she left without heeding those who wished to speak to her.

In Fru Rendalen's bedroom Nora stood clinging to Tinka, trembling and crying. Tinka was very dejected. Some one peeped in from the passage. As no one forbade it, she entered softly; she looked at them with wide open questioning eyes—it was Anna Rogne.

"What is it?" she whispered. Nora raised her face; they both looked at her. Anna remembered some remarks which Tora had made in the course of the summer; on these she now formed her opinion—"I suspect the worst." She folded

## A MISFORTUNE

her hands ; her tears began to flow. Nora laid her head down again on Tinka's shoulder and cried bitterly. All the time they could hear Tora in the sitting-room ; they could not distinguish her words, they were broken, wrung from her by bewilderment, danger, despair. Presently there was silence ; the silence was almost worse, there also they were as still as death. At last they could bear it no longer, what did it mean ? They exchanged looks, and were on the point of breaking in on them, when they heard heavy, rapid steps across the floor ; the door was opened violently, and Fru Rendalen rushed past them with her hands above her head. What is it ! in Heaven's name, what is it ?

They went in. Tora was lying on the floor, Miss Hall stood over her ; on the table was a cup of water. Miss Hall looked up quickly. "Help me to get her up again." They did so ; they saw that Tora had not fainted, but she either would not or could not help herself. When she again lay on the sofa, looking like death—ghastly, thin, dishevelled—Miss Hall turned with a meaning look towards the others. They gazed at her terrified ; Miss Hall answered their looks with two confirmatory nods.

They all three drew back a few steps. After a little while they slipped out one after the other to Fru Rendalen. She was sitting motionless in a large arm-chair. Nora came and laid her hand on her lap. There was not a word spoken.

Again they heard Tora from within. They heard her explain, cry, bemoan herself. Miss

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

Hall came in to them. "What is it now?" asked Fru Rendalen almost grudgingly, she was quite overdone.

"Did you know," said Miss Hall, "that he came after her again?" They stared at her. "She had taken refuge out on an island with the family of a pilot. He traced her and laid wait for her there as well, the wretch! It was then that she went into the west country, where she was taken ill."

"The poor child!" cried Fru Rendalen. Her sympathy was aroused again; she got up quickly, and went back to Tora; she ought never to have left her.

"My dear, dear child," she said. But the moment Tora saw her she turned and repulsed her with her hands, crying "No, no, no! Don't come; don't say anything—no, no, no! It is not my fault, it is not my fault. Yes, great God, it is my fault!" And she broke into the wildest crying.

All the same, Fru Randalen came up to her; so soon as she could she said, "Don't take it in this way, my child; we shall never desert you for it." This seemed to calm her, but when Fru Rendalen added that some steps must be taken, she must speak to her son about it, Tora broke out again, "No, no, no! Oh God, no!" She became almost frantic.

"But, dear Tora, you know yourself how things are. It cannot be helped, this will become known everywhere."

"I know, I know; but say nothing to him.

### A MISFORTUNE

No, I must get out of the way first. Do not say anything. There is no need." She raved on, and her voice was so heart-breaking that they all hastened to her. They wanted to quiet her by holding her, but she did not look at them. Each time she freed her hands or her head, and cried and implored, "They must, must, must be silent." In the midst of it all arrived Rendalen. He had chanced to open the bath-room door, and so heard the cries and moans. He thought that they came from the bedroom and crossed the passage to it. There he stood; Tora sprang up with a shriek, and then suddenly flung herself down, with her face in her hands. Fru Rendalen went towards her son, took him by the hand, and went with him to his room. Tora tried to rise, to go away. She would live no longer—no, not for the whole world. She struggled with the others, but for Tinka she would have fled. She was beside herself. She implored and struggled. Tinka held her till her strength began to fail; she called for help. Anna fetched Fru Rendalen, and as soon as she came Tora gave in. She allowed herself to be led by her to the sofa, and, when she was calmer, into the bedroom. There she was undressed and laid in a bed, which had been placed by the side of Fru Rendalen's. Fru Rendalen was obliged to sit by her side and hold her hand—even in her sleep she sobbed like a child and bemoaned herself.

## CHAPTER III

### PEACE-MAKING WITHIN, PROPOSALS OF PEACE WITHOUT

WHEN Fru Rendalen took her son by the hand, when she proposed to speak to him, it was by no means with pleasure that she did so, but, on the contrary, with great anxiety.

The relations between mother and son had, as we know, for some time lost their confidential character ; for some time they had not been good, and at the present moment they were actually bad. On his side it almost amounted to a breach. No one could interfere, not even Karl Vangen. Tomas declined to speak on the subject, it pained him if Karl brought it up. This last phase had been produced quite by chance, by an external cause.

According to arrangement, Tora Holm was to have assisted Fru Rendalen ; but when she remained ill in the west country, Nora offered to take her place. Nora's gifts lay in a different direction from Tora's—her help was therefore given in a different way ; among other things, she was deputed to keep the books. One day when, for want of something to do, Nora chanced to be



## PEACE-MAKING WITHIN

comparing past and present expenses, turning over the earlier pages of the books, Tomas, elegant as usual, hurried through the room on his way out. "Who is this Tomasine," Nora inquired, "who has had so much money? It is not your mother, for she always puts 'self' in the entries, and nothing more."

"Tomasine? I never heard of any Tomasine." He came up to her, put down his hat, and in his short-sighted way bent over the register, knitting his light eyebrows, staring with his sharp grey eyes. She turned over the pages and showed him the entries, month after month, which extended back for several years. She could not make much of it, but *he* began to do so; for her the subject had no great interest, for him it appeared all-impotent. While he studied the books, she observed him and the effect which his near neighbourhood had on her; it was agreeable. She looked at the freckles on his clean-shaven face. In repose the sharp lines of the mouth, the quickness of the eyes, and the power of the brow showed more distinctly; the strong jaw, the bristling red hair, pleased her. She followed the short, slightly recurved, nervous fingers as they turned over the leaves and toyed with the cover of the book. A strong, freckled hand, covered thickly with light bristles, a thick wrist—one felt the strength of the arm, she traced it involuntarily to the shoulder; how strong he must be. She heard the scraping of his necktie on his shirt-front when he drew his breath. She noticed the slight whiff of scent which, now that his head was so near her, mingled

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

with the smell of his skin. Something of half terror, an intoxication, a feeling of increased intelligence came over her—her thoughts moved more quickly, were more highly strung. She wished it might continue—it was absolutely pleasant.

"Where is mother?"

"I don't know."

"This is very curious." He took up his hat and went out. Hardly five minutes later, Fru Rendalen came quickly in from the inner passage. "You excite yourself so, Tomas."

"Excite myself?" As soon as she saw that Nora was there she turned quickly towards him. "Hush," she said, and went towards her bedroom, he following her. Nora heard him talking quickly and without a pause; she could hear Fru Rendalen as well, parrying his words, and at last tearfully justifying herself. At length he went away; long afterwards Fru Rendalen came back, sad and sorrowful. "I have done a dreadfully foolish thing," said Nora shamefacedly.

Fru Rendalen made no reply; she continued to walk slowly up and down. It was more than she could bear alone, and Nora's evident sympathy tempted her.

"God knows, I believed it was one of the best acts of my life, and now I am told it is the worst." Tears bedewed her spectacles, and as usual she turned her attention to them as she sat down. Nora rose and came forward sympathetically. "But, dear Fru Rendalen." She knelt down beside her. The old lady wanted this friendliness, wanted some one to confide in,

## PEACE-MAKING WITHIN

and so Nora learned that "Tomasine" was Tomas's sister. The girl had begun well, but from the time that she had gone to America she fell into bad ways, and was sent home again, out of her mind. Fru Rendalen had paid for her till her death. She had been entirely silent about it to her son—why need he know of it? But now he fell upon her with the most frightful accusations. The dead girl had had the same right in her father's fortune as he; the law on this subject was vile, no honourable person could abide by it. In the most violent words he had cast his sister's misfortune in Fru Rendalen's face. *She* was responsible for it.

Nora was dismayed. She had heard one or two things said since she had been up here, but this——!

Rendalen's manner during the time which followed frightened her, if possible, still more; she suffered almost as much as Fru Rendalen. He treated his mother distantly and coldly when he was obliged to be with her; as a rule he avoided her.

From the time he was a boy Tomas had at times felt her to be coarse-grained and wanting in refinement, as though he had no relationship with her. The feeling had always yielded to gratitude, and to the similarity in their views and purposes of life; and, whatever his feelings might be, he nourished a constant admiration for her strength and power of government. His ill-temper had always come suddenly, and passed away directly.

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

It was quite the contrary at a later time.

His mother did not understand all this, neither did Karl, but they realised that he was unhappy. He seemed to them to be in a growing state of self-torment, and in this they were not mistaken. He would discover, with all the ingenuity of a *Kierkegaard*, that if *he* had never existed, his sister would have lived happily. She would have had the property then, and the hereditary tendency would not have grown into insanity; or he would picture his sister brought up there with him, with Augusta, and with the other girls, in the garden, in the school; all those strangers had admittance here, she only had not—his sister, his father's daughter. That his mother could with an easy conscience buy herself free from this imperative duty, and that with a few paltry daler a month; that she had never felt that more was demanded of her!—what a crime had been committed against the unfortunate girl, and she had never once comprehended this!

In the midst of it all came the incident of Tora. His mother *insisted* on speaking to him. The first time, as we know, she was interrupted; but when Tora was asleep she went in and confided it all to him. He perceived at once its bearing on the school, on her friends, and on himself, and fell into such a fury against Niels Fürst, whom he had not loved before, as can be best described by his own exclamation: "If I had him here I would beat him to a jelly with my own two hands."

Although Tomas had no outward resemblance

## PEACE-MAKING WITHIN

to his father, he could look so like him that it made Fru Rendalen shudder.

This very fear gave her courage. For a whole year she had seen how his impatience, irritability, and quickness of temper increased. When she herself aroused it she did no more than justify herself, or perhaps go away ; he had really cowed her by degrees.

But now another was in question. Tora's despair forced her on ; it had, too, an alarming resemblance to what she saw before her. When, after another overpowering outburst, he was about to rush away, she placed herself before him.

"Tomas, you frighten the life out of me with your violence. You give way to it more and more ; it will grow beyond you at last, my son."

He shuddered, and grew deadly white.

"Yes, excess is excess in whatever way it shows itself, and I think you ought to be on your guard."

Her voice trembled ; their eyes met and measured each other ; an unhappiness and bitterness had risen into his, which wounded her.

"What, Tomas, may I not so much as warn you—I, your own mother ? No, do not look at me like that. It is not *my* fault. I have combated it as well as I could—yes, before you were born, Tomas, and I intend to combat it still. For the last year you have not struggled against your temper, and it is especially on me that you vent it."

He stood near the window, looking out. He turned now with a melancholy expression.

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

"What is it, Tomas ? Tell me, in God's name, what it is."

But he turned away again, and laid his head on his arm.

"I do not understand you, Tomas, you are so supercilious to me. You say there is something naturally blind about me, and I know it. Yes, you often humiliate me—often when I am alone, and that I can bear ; but often before others as well, and that you should not do. At all events, you ought to be able to bear having your faults pointed out to you by me."

She said the last words almost humbly ; they worked strongly upon him. He did not speak, but he turned and began to walk quickly up and down in visible agitation.

"If I could only understand what it is you are vexed with me for. It is not only what you rebuked me for—— Yes, Tomas, you cannot bear to hear that word ; but I have had to endure more than words. It is not that alone ; there is something more under all this. What is it ? Why do you never talk, now, Tomas, either to me or Karl ? You are unhappy ; do you think we have not noticed it ? I would so joyfully do anything for you. Even if I am inferior to you——"

"I cannot endure to hear that word," he cried.

"No, no, but you never will condescend to speak to me, so I am compelled to think—no, I will not say that, but you see yourself what you are ; one must not so much as make use of a word before you, and you—— But I will be silent, I see that you are suffering, my son ; if

### PEACE-MAKING WITHIN

only you would remember that I suffer as well. Great heavens! must I ask permission before I remind you that this has been going on for a year? I have not the slightest idea what is the matter—not the slightest, Tomas, beyond what results from my want of ability. If there is anything that I can set right, only tell me—tell me, whatever it is. Can you not trust me?"

"Cannot you trust me?" he burst out, and threw himself down on the sofa, with his face in his hands.

And then it transpired that he thirsted for sympathy.

His was a warm, impulsive nature, which must have trust and affection if he were not to waste his whole life. The independence to which he had accustomed himself, and which had increased during his violent studies, his continual journeys, and by his different plans, had changed into a sense of deprivation—had been succeeded by the most terrible hunger when he was here in the midst of a daily recurring life, full of heartiness and devotion—devotion to one another, while he was always outside it. All his being yearned for what he saw. "Not the cursed littlenesses," as he expressed himself; "no, only to have trust as the groundwork of everything—trust, and nothing but trust."

They must just bear with him and take him as he was, *because they believed in him*. Otherwise, he should go to destruction.

Fru Rendalen sat there, she had taken his head on her lap; she listened and listened, her heart

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

swelled, and she laid her spectacles aside, for they were no longer any use to her.

"He is right," she thought; "oh, how right he is!" One image rose up in her mind after another; above all, the incident with the teachers. She had believed them at once, and to humour them had taken the school away from him, and from that time forward had in a manner controlled it. Till this moment she had lived in the blessed delusion that he was indifferent to this—nay, that it was a relief to him. And thus things began to dawn upon her which she might otherwise never have discovered. She did not understand this delicate, sensitive nature. If his repressed powers did not recover their strength, the fault would be hers.

"You mean about the teachers, Tomas?" she asked, and she could hardly control her voice. He took her hands and held them while he enumerated his grievances.

There were, oh, such a string of them, both great and small—some so small that she had never been conscious of them. An answer, a word of advice in passing, a remark to some one else, even a silent look in response to something he had said. In her distress, the worthy Fru Rendalen asked his pardon with voice and gesture and tender embraces, declaring that hereafter if he said he wished to go to the moon, she would believe him. She had never worked herself up before to such decided exaggeration, so that Tomas was forced to smile. Her memory was awakened. She remembered clearly how it had all happened, and how she had first lost confidence in



## PEACE-MAKING WITHIN

him. It had been after his famous lecture ; he had taken her much farther with him on to "slippery ice" than she had really the courage to go, and she had only discovered this afterwards. That was the foundation of it all. His power of persuasion, his gift for talking people over, and something indescribable added to this, carried one away ; that was undoubtedly what the teachers had felt. Now unfortunately it is the way with mankind, that as soon as we discover that any one has carried us farther than it suits us to go, we not only try to fight against it—that would be right enough—but we look ever afterwards with mistrust at what that person says. Fru Rendalen knew that at times she had done this, and had tried to correct it ; but she had had no idea how often she had done so, and still less how often he had noticed it. She knew that she hurt herself when she did so, but till now it had never occurred to her that she had hurt him—he seemed so superior and so distant.

There was a real reconciliation. It was broken off, and taken up again during the next few days, whenever it was possible.

The immediate fate of the unfortunate Tora was decided at the same time, but this was but a small settlement compared to the great one which had been accomplished. A confidence was now opened between them which on his side poured out with overwhelming wealth. The long privation of a year satisfied itself in two days ; he was so spontaneous, so tender, and so loyal in the smallest things, that she more than admired him,

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

she adored him. If when she was wrapt in her own thoughts, he came unexpectedly upon her, she coloured ; you could see by her face when she heard his step—she guessed everything he wanted, and *everything* he wished for was remarkable. If she saw that he was in a good humour, she sang—the worst thing she could have done, for no one ever yet discovered what it was she believed herself to be singing.

Nora would have felt unhappy if she had not as well been drawn into this great feast of reconciliation, which lasted from morning till evening, and from morning till evening again.

In the midst of all their joy, Tora's affairs, as has been said, were arranged. Tomas had soon come to a clear understanding of what should be done. The newspapers announced that Fürst had been ordered to Stockholm, and he offered to take Tora there at once. Fürst should be forced to marry her—not, of course, that she should live with such a scoundrel, but in order to give his name to her child and support to herself, so that she might learn to do something, and be able to care for her child. If Rendalen had to go to Fürst's superior officers—nay, to the King himself—he would answer for it that the wretch should do her justice. None of those in the secret, least of all Fru Rendalen, doubted for a moment. They were surrounded by an atmosphere of confidence and hope.

The unfortunate Tora had from the first felt the deepest aversion to Rendalen's plan ; the ground on which she consented to yield was con-

## PEACE-MAKING WITHIN

sideration for the school and her friends, that as little shame as possible might fall on them. They had forborne to mention this, but it forced itself upon them.

Only in one particular was Rendalen's plan altered—Fru Rendalen would go instead of her son ; his presence might have produced the very opposite of what they wished.

Two days after this plan had been conceived—three days after the violent interruption to the lecture—Fru Rendalen and Tora set off.

On the afternoon of the last day Fru Rendalen had become suddenly very despondent. It was known that there had been some worry about money, but that was always happening ; and, indeed, it had been set right, but, notwithstanding, the gloom did not disappear. Rendalen went to her and tried to find out what it was. She put him off with excuses once or twice, but when he held her fast she was obliged to blurt out that she could not tell him ; it was another person's secret—"not Tora's," she hastened to add. "Use your own eyes, and then you will not need to tempt me." He did use them, both on man and beast, but found it quite impossible to discover the cause of his mother's low spirits. She carried the secret away with her. He went round and asked everybody, but they were all equally obtuse.

It made some stir in the town that Fru Rendalen, at this time of the year, and in the midst of the school work, should go to Stockholm ; and that if she needed a companion she should have chosen Tora Holm, who was ill.

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

Tora Holm's mother announced with some pride that probably her daughter would not return, for if Stockholm seemed to be the best place, she would continue her studies there. Every one had heard that Tora's talents were more than ordinary, so this seemed quite reasonable.

Fru Rendalen had been up to speak to Sheriff Tue and his wife about Nora. According to her ideas, Nora was cut out for teaching and directing. She became less self-assertive, too, the more responsibility she had, and she had ceased to be capricious.

Fru Rendalen asked if Nora might not move over to "The Estate," and during her absence overlook the house and school, and take charge of the money and books. Afterwards she might help with them, and perhaps perfect herself in school subjects. Both parents gave their unqualified consent to this at once, they had precisely the same opinion of their daughter as Fru Rendalen. Her father added, smiling, that she seemed to have no notion of falling in love. "No," her mother observed gladly; "she has no inclination for marriage."

At the house and in the school, all thought it strange that the youngest teacher, a pupil a year ago, should be put over them; but it was certainly true that Nora displayed her best qualities—she was clear-headed, ready, and marvellously helpful.

She got on well with Rendalen, he seemed to find pleasure in conversing with her. "Conversing with" is not the right expression—he

## PEACE-MAKING WITHIN

talked and she listened, but then he never did otherwise ; he always went away when others joined in.

Although he was not quite thirty, he had by degrees acquired a number of curious ways, but each one was the result of something in the development of his character. Had not his fashion of running away from any discussion had its origin in a series of sorrowful experiences ?

He was making a noble struggle with the bursts of passion which certain things, certain names, always aroused. The result was that whenever he restrained himself, he choked as though he had swallowed something the wrong way ; and if it was very violent, he spat quickly two or three times through his closed lips—not actual spitting, at the most a sort of fine spray.

Tinka mimicked him incomparably. She made a face over little things as though she had taken too much mustard, for greater ones as though she had swallowed soft soap ; she would turn her head and give a cough like a cat, or if she pretended to spit, it was with an air of disdainful superiority. Very soon all the pupils followed her example—there was nothing they did better.

At the school, Tomas Rendalen was just what he had been when he first came home—all brightness and life, wonderfully careful in making all his explanations clear, and often quite fascinating in his manner.

It must be confessed that he proved a rod in pickle for the teachers, but there was no longer any misunderstanding him, though they were

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

often on pins and needles when he began to interfere ; but it was only necessary to speak to him about it, and he became at once irresistibly charming ; this, however, did not prevent a recurrence.

His uneven treatment of the children, his way of treating any subject according to the temper of the moment, remained unfortunately the same, but it was done unconsciously ; and this fact, the absolute justice of his mind, and more than all the frankness with which he begged pardon when he had once been convinced that he was to blame, set things for the most part right again.

Miss Hall was obliged to confess that she had looked too hardly on this his incorrigible failing, as well as on several others ; for even his admirers had to allow that he was not perfect. For instance, in the face of several classes assembled for a lecture on physics, he would begin to carve a face on the laboratory table, which some chance had begun there, and shortly afterwards would rave like a Turk because a little girl had cut a tiny little name on her desk ! "Did she think that was what she came to school for ? did she suppose her desk was made to be cut to pieces ? "

Fru Rendalen sent word from Sockholm that Furst was away, but was to return in a few days, they must therefore wait. She would employ the time in establishing Tora in some respectable family, and in collecting some requisites for the school. They had made the journey slowly, and notwithstanding the time of year it had done them both good, as did their stay in Stockholm. The letter was very hopeful, Tora improved every

### PEACE-MAKING WITHIN

day. Rendalen was enchanted; any one who did not know him would have thought that he looked upon Tora's misfortunes as the greatest good luck. "Now you see," he called out cheerfully whenever he met any of those in the secret. What he meant by it was not very easy to understand.

But his certainty of victory and that of the others received a serious blow when the report spread about that Niels Fürst was engaged! and to whom? To "Your affectionate friend, your ever grateful Milla Engel."

The report came from Anton Dösen, Niels Fürst's greatest friend; he did not give it as more than a rumour, but he believed that it was certain. The families on both sides were diplomatic; they knew nothing about it.

The members of the Society were a sight to see when they met during this time! Above all, Tinka Hansen, when she solemnly opened the register and pointed to Milla's name! She could take her oath that every one looked upon Niels Fürst as thoroughly immoral. No one had been more severe than Milla; her mother's legacy made this only natural. No, this engagement was impossible! One could not think so badly of her. Such a thing would be disloyal, both to the living and to the dead. Milla's different letters to Nora from Paris were now read aloud again.

She and an American lady were living in a French family, who had had great losses, but who had aristocratic relations and acquaintances; she lived in a legitimist atmosphere, but it was not

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

too severe. She had both the opportunity and the inclination to admire everything "fine," independent of religion and politics—everything fashionable, everything where talent and beauty were to be found. And she used her opportunity; "with my enthusiastic temperament, you know," wrote Milla.

She had begun as a loyal member of the Society, the obedient pupil of the school, and therefore giped at the French spirit. But almost without warning she turned round: paintings, novels, and theatrical representations enchanted her; life, even when viewed from a distance, stimulated her.

It was evident that this was no real change of opinion; one heard the American's voice, though the writing was Milla's; but for this very reason it had not received the attention which it deserved.

Milla wrote that what they believed when they were together at school would not really do: her father had been right. In every letter she related something or another which was to prove this—not in the slightest degree in doubtful taste; on the contrary, with a delicacy which was not without its talent. "One must have no illusions," she wrote; "one will thus be least unhappy." Nora had replied, giving her her opinion of it.

This all now received fresh importance. Was Milla's way of writing something more than the reflection of the life around her? Was it really a well-considered introduction to her engagement to Niels Fürst? Impossible! Nora was above thinking so ill of friends. She had given Tora



## PEACE-MAKING WITHIN

her solemn promise not to tell anything to Milla ; she now considered herself released from it, and wrote out of the fulness of her heart. Tinka wrote as well ; she was full of the offence against Tora, and the report that it was to such a person that Tora's greatest friend had engaged herself—she whose name stood in the register !

Five days passed before they again received a letter from Fru Rendalen, and it was short and dry. Fürst had not yet returned. A short time afterwards they received a long and touching letter from Tora, and then several days passed without anything further from either of them. Ten days had gone by since Nora and Tinka had written to Milla—they would have sworn that she would have answered at once. She ought to have done so after such a piece of information and such a charge.

They became very nervous, especially when some one, who had taken no part in the affair, now remarked that, as soon as she had heard that Milla and Fürst were travelling together, she had thought “ that would be a suitable match.”

Of course, this was Anna Rogne: why had she not said anything ? “ Because the others would have mistrusted it ; and,” she added, smiling, “ it would have been wrong.” At last one afternoon, when Nora came in from the singing lesson, she found a sealed envelope on the table in the sitting-room. “ Here it is,” was written at the bottom in Rendalen's large handwriting. Nora suspected bad news, as he had not brought it to her at once. She had promised the

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

others not to read it before they came, but one cannot keep those sort of promises.

Fru Rendalen had had her great conversation with Fürst. He had listened to all she told him with a cool politeness, as if he had been prepared for it, and when at last he had to answer, he began by saying that this was difficult, as their views differed so much as to the person in question. In his eyes Tora Holm was, in no small degree, a sensual woman, who could hardly restrain herself in the neighbourhood of a man. To the question if he were aware of the power which he possessed, he answered "Yes." It only, however, affected a certain description of woman, and Tora was precisely one of these. He was under no more obligation to marry her than any other with whom he had had an intrigue. He would provide for the child, and for her as well, with pleasure—that is to say, he would make a reasonable annual allowance.

Fru Rendalen threatened to bring the whole thing before his superiors, or even, if necessary, before the King.

"Pray do; I can reach as far as you can, Frue."

She said to him that this would be a hard fight; to which he answered that he knew how it should be conducted—he was not going to have his career spoilt by a lot of schemers. The lady in question was stamped in good society as a *femme entretenue*—it was shocking to wish to force her upon him as his wife.

He understood what it all meant: he was to

## PEACE-MAKING WITHIN

offer himself up for the school, but he was not inclined to be so amiable. He knew what kind of lectures were given both in the girls' "Society" and elsewhere—what sort of conversations and readings they had had ; it was natural enough that sensual natures should be aroused by such things. He therefore considered that the school should bear the blame ; it would have a good deal of that sort of thing.

Fru Rendalen had a decided impression that something had happened to annoy him, and that, before he came to her, he knew for what he would be called in question. The conversation had so agitated her that she became ill, which was the reason for her not writing sooner. She had not wished to mention her illness until she could say, at the same time, that she was starting the next day. This she could now do. She had not the courage to undertake anything more in this strange place, nor did she think it would be wise. As far as she could understand, publicity and open war were just what he wished for.

He was a dreadful man ; they must all be on their guard. She had no doubt that this would bring their school into danger, and remain a great grief to Tora and her innocent friends. Tora was quite overcome. They both looked forward with dread to the parting to-morrow.

The letter closed with a lament that this warfare, which had arisen out of the school work, should never have an end. "Our enemies have gained a dangerous ally ; we shall soon see if we have gained any as well."

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

Late that evening—Miss Hall, Tinka, and Anna Rogne had all read the letter, and were in the sitting-room with Nora—there arrived a telegram. They supposed that it was from Fru Rendalen to Tomas, and Nora had got up to ask one of the servants to take it to him, when Tinka called out that it was not for Rendalen, but for Nora herself. "For me?" asked Nora, and came forward. It was true, it was for her, from Milla. It ran: "*Frightful: report untrue.*"

A fortnight had passed since Nora and Tinka had written. Milla had therefore had the letters for ten days, and then sent—a telegram! What did it mean? While the others soon forgot it in Fru Rendalen's news, compared to which this last event was comparatively indifferent, Anna Rogne remained sitting with the telegram in her hand. She pondered over it.

The others began to ask themselves whether they also would now be mixed up in the Tora scandal. "War" might already be declared. If Niels Fürst had written to any one in the town and given *his* version, what would happen? A time might come when they would hardly dare, any one of them, to show themselves in the streets.

Anna Rogne interrupted them. "This telegram; ought it not to be taken in to Rendalen?" Yes, of course, and it was done at once. They all expected that Rendalen would come to them directly, but they waited in vain; on the contrary, they heard him a little time afterwards at the piano.

"Well, as Rendalen does not seem to pay any

## PEACE-MAKING WITHIN

attention to this telegram either, perhaps I may be allowed to suggest what may have happened?" asked Anna, rather ceremoniously. The state of things she thought must be that Fürst and Milla really had been engaged, but that on the receipt of Nora's letter she had at once broken it off, with such an intimation as to make him understand the reason; that was why he had been prepared to meet Fru Rendalen, that was why he wished for publicity and war. He can never win the day without it, and he must win; a marriage with the richest girl in any of the coast towns is the condition for the success of his career. Just because Milla had been engaged to him she had been ashamed to write. She had reflected—tried as well, perhaps—until she had found a way out of the difficulty by telegraphing.

Anna ended by saying, "I suspect that Lieutenant Fürst is at this moment in Paris."

It may as well be said at once that Anna's position in regard to Milla was fateful for the latter. It influenced firstly those whom she was constantly among, later Fru Rendalen. Neils Fürst really was on the way to Paris, but if Milla's friends had sent on Fru Rendalen's letter to her she would hardly have received him; and if they had asked Tora to write to Milla—as she at a later time, when it was necessary, wrote to them—he would never have been able to approach her either personally or by letter. Indeed, even as it was, he did not do so. He had first to obtain help from home; but he had taken that into consideration, he had not wasted his time.

## CHAPTER IV

### WAR

THE day before Fru Rendalen's letter and Nora's telegram reached "The Estate," Anton Dösen had received a letter from Fürst. It had been well considered before it was written, and evidently was intended to be read aloud or sent the round of the town. In his narration about Tora he laid great stress upon their meeting at Fru Gröndal's. He had only seen her once before, and only in passing; he had not the slightest idea that he should meet her there. She had been entertaining and pleasant, Fru Gröndal had said, until he came, when she became unnatural at once; she could not bear him to speak to Fru Gröndal, she hid herself, and let herself be sought for, and then took it into her head to go away. Of course he followed her, just to see what it was all about. As soon as he came near her on board the boat, she began to cry. She would not let him help her on shore; but all the same, she walked past his house every day, and peeped in to see if he were at home, and then went on to the wood or up to the "Groves"—alone. He recalled

## WAR

certain readings and lectures up at the school ; it seemed to him that a girl who had come from an atmosphere so exciting to the senses, would be sure to conduct herself somewhat in that way. He thought that this was "magnetic influence" enough, no more was needed.

He would not deny that at last he had allowed himself to be tempted to follow her into the wood, where she amused herself by playing hide-and-seek with him. Little girls always begin in that way. But he asked if any man, with a regard for himself would marry a girl who went past his windows every day to tempt him out into the woods. Fru Rendalen thought otherwise. She had come after him to Stockholm to arrange the marriage on the spot. It might have proved like her own.

For his part, he had far too high a conception of marriage to attempt to profane it in such a way. He had offered to support the girl, at all events as long as the child remained a burden, and he would acknowledge it as his. Honour and duty compelled him to go thus far, but further—— That would be to patch a bad business with a still worse one.

To this every one to whom Dösen read the letter agreed. He read it in the shop, in the streets, at the club. Some people borrowed the letter from him, and although the paper had been carefully chosen, it was passed about so much that it became an illegible rag. Two copies had been made of it, one for Rendalen, at his request, and one— yes, Dösen hesitated a moment about this one,

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

but after repeated requests he could not refuse—for Tora Holm's mother. He obtained some enjoyment from this copy. Tora's mother was a violent, powerful woman, embittered in the struggle of life. She looked with doubt and scorn upon most circumstances. When angry she was regardless of consequences. One morning, in the middle of school time, she came up to "The Estate" in a heavy, shabby duffel cloak, a bonnet with bright-coloured feathers, and her bare hands in an old muff, with which she gesticulated while she cried and screamed. In the broadest Bergen accent she demanded her daughter—they must give her back her daughter; they had ruined her and stolen her. She was a good girl when she went there, but "up here, in the cursed old Kurt house, she had been ruined. Now, God forgive them for it, she was brought to shame, and made the talk of the town. She, her mother, had been stuffed with lies." But they should pay for it; they should be locked up. She would send the police after them. Her passion was uncontrollable, but her grief was real.

All fled far and wide, so she burst into one of the classes, which at once broke up, the teacher deserting her post. She contrived to break up three classes in this fashion: she made a tremendous turmoil. Some of the girls were so frightened that they rushed right up to the top attic, and stood there shivering, straining their ears and wondering if they dare go down. Some of the elder pupils, who remembered from stories that on such occasions you must show determina-



## WAR

tion, remained behind, and tried to talk her into reason. But at this she became beside herself. This was evidently an example of the way in which they learned to be indecorous up here. It shocked her that "the children of worthy men" should justify such a thing. They had to run away as well, with their fingers in their ears.

But the little ones got the greatest amusement out of her. They surrounded her, and followed her about in triumph. The whole procession swept into the kitchen, where she began the same story. The occupants felt sorry for her, but they did not venture to say a word. So the whole train went off again along the hall, to Rendalen's door, which was fastened, then to Karl Vangen's, which was also fastened, back to Fru Rendalen's, which was open. In they went, she wanted to see if she could not find Rendalen.

Rendalen was in the town, and would not return for an hour. But Karl Vangen came in. He very gravely commanded silence, sent away the children, and took the poor mother into his own room. There she sat for at least an hour, and poured out her heart to him. It was a bewildered tirade, about Tora, about her husband who drank, about their poverty. At last she went away down the avenue, with a hundred kroner in her pocket, weeping quietly.

The school had all the appearance of a hen-house when some one has broken in upon its denizens. Has not every one seen such a sight? At first the hens fly with terrified cries against windows, walls, steps, and roosting-places, till

### THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

they become tired and confused, and can fly no more. Then they run about the floor with wilder cries than ever, knocking against dishes, troughs, one another. And when the danger is past, the commotion is not—they chatter, lament, scream all at once, in continual commotion. This goes on and increases, for whenever one of them is inclined to stop, some others are more persevering and will not. They recall all the remembrance of their affright, and the whole bevy starts off again worse than before.

Finally, they begin to plume themselves, to flap their wings, and set themselves straight, till at last things return to their original condition. But at the school things did not settle down during the whole day—some effects remained even longer, and threatened to become dangerous.

What spiteful pleasure was shown in the town, what victorious laughter was heard! Nothing else was talked of in the offices, on the quays, in the streets!

When a day or two later Fru Rendalen returned, the landing-place was crowded with people, mostly young men, who had come to meet her. It became known at the school on Saturday that she would arrive by the steamer on Sunday afternoon. No one could find a better use for his leisure time than to see how a great person returns from a defeat.

The scandal, which she had sought to cover by the journey, had now become as great as the journey had been long. When Rendalen came down with the carriage, he could not push his way

## WAR

through, but had to get some one to take charge of it while he tried to get past himself. Nora, Tinka, Anna, and several other friends, who had talked of going down together, stopped when they saw the crowd; thus following the example of St. Peter of old, naturally with the difference demanded by modern days. Little Miss Hall alone defied these dangerous warlike preparations. She slipped along till she reached Rendalen's side, just as he was preparing to go on board. He was very nervous.

Fru Rendalen looked much worn, the glances which she hastily exchanged with Tomas and Miss Hall proved that she understood why the crowd was here, and that she did not feel safe among them. She held her son's arm very fast.

But respect for her—perhaps, now that they were face to face with her, a feeling of compassion also—prevented them from attempting anything. Way was made for them. Of course they could see by words and manner that this was no guard of honour, even some of their older acquaintances were there, such as the Town Bailiff and his wife. They hardly bowed; with the sternness of high morality they watched these evil-doers go by.

Those who had been standing nearest to the quay now made their way towards the carriage, followed by degrees by those whom the three had already passed. The carriage was quite surrounded when they got into it. In consequence of this they had to go slowly, step by step, once more through the crowd, which became more tiresome. They were hardly through before Rendalen whipped up.

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

He was much incensed. At this moment he saw Anton Dösen, with a number of others, hurrying across towards them ; they were flushed and had evidently just come from dinner. They all bowed with immense deference ; either Dösen's bow was impolite, or it appeared so to Rendalen in his irritation. In an instant he pulled up the horses, threw back the reins to Miss Hall, was out of the carriage and up with Dösen, giving him a box on the ear which made him reel. He was back at the carriage, up and off again so quickly, that no one grasped what had happened before the carriage was rumbling over the cobble stones.

In the hall up at the house stood the three deserters, Tinka, Anna, and Nora. Miss Hall was the first up the steps, and with beaming eyes told them all that had happened ; but Fru Rendalen found no pleasure in it. Rendalen, too, disappeared as soon as he had brought his mother up ; it was long before he returned, and he was then in low spirits.

The conversation turned exclusively on the dark point in Tora's story, upon which she herself had laid but little stress, hardly ever mentioning it—the meeting at Fru Gröndal's. It had frustrated any attempt made in the town to lay the blame on Niels Fürst. Fru Gröndal had supported Fürst's assertions in the most minute particulars.

Tora Holm had been furiously in love with him, she returned to the town merely to get Fürst to accompany her.

Fru Rendalen could assure them that the only

## WAR

thing which Tora had been "furious" about was the confidential terms which Fru Grøndal and Furst were upon. This had put her out all the more perhaps, because she was beginning to feel an interest in him. She understood this later. They all agreed to let Tora herself relate the circumstances. Tinka wrote to her the same evening.

Rendalen had joined them during this discussion, and now the events of the journey were related and all about Tora. Fru Rendalen was giving them her reading of Tora as she now knew her, and the others were deeply engrossed in it, when Karl Vangen interrupted them; he came in from church. The meeting between him and his adoptive mother was more than usually warm, she went into his room with him. She did not return.

The one whom Tora's misfortune had struck the hardest was Karl Vangen, but no one knew this except Fru Rendalen.

He had gone quietly on from day to day, the happiest man in the world. Whenever he met Tora she was evidently pleased, though he never ventured to construe this into a sign that she loved him—far from it; but *he* loved her, and thought that if Fru Rendalen would ever help him, the pliable Tora might be brought to share in some of his interests. If she came to do that, perhaps she might perceive his great affection for her; perhaps she might then feel that he would be able to do something to make her happy too. Fru Rendalen had often enough heard him talk

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

to Tora and about Tora, but had suspected nothing till the morning when she told him what had happened. She saw him change colour and remain silent instead of expressing sorrow or offering help; but even then she was not certain, beside which she was much absorbed in her new relations with Tomas. Still she had a dim suspicion of the truth. But when the money which she had reckoned on for the journey could not be obtained, and Karl took her into his own room and offered her his savings and a small sum which he had inherited—then, as he looked into her eyes, she understood it all. He could not keep silence any longer, he held out his arms——  
“Yes, that is how it is, mother.”

“MY DEAR NORA,

“I do not know what you can think of me for not writing, but your last letter so upset me on account of our dear Tora that I really did not know what to write. How at a loss, how helpless, one feels at such a time, dear Nora! And, let me add at once, how ashamed. To think that such a thing could happen to any one with whom we have associated! I shall never forget what my father said the first time he saw her. I was very angry at it then, we thought so highly of one another. Are you quite certain, dear Nora, that everything was exactly as Tora has said? You know she was never very exact, and, especially in such a case, it seems to me that a person is almost obliged afterwards to put a different colour on it. Do you not think the same? I will

## WAR

not repeat what I have heard, it may be a mistake too ; but you know yourself, dear Nora, that she never was particular. Do you remember that once or twice you had to check her when she was telling us stories. You see, she had been in France ; she knew a great deal more than we others. When I recall what she has told me at different times, I feel that it amounted to a great deal. May not some of this have affected her disposition ? Of course, I do not say this as a reproach, least of all could I do so now when she is unhappy, but perhaps this may explain a few things. I am terribly sorry for her, and you would do me a service if you could tell me any way in which I could be of use to her without offending or embarrassing her. I will not answer dear Tinka this time, give her my best love, and say that the expression in her last letter, 'Tora's greatest friend,' is not a true one, at least from my side. It might have appeared so at one time, I do not deny it ; but that was quite and entirely Tora's fault. Not that she forced herself upon me, it would be wrong to say so, but it was impossible, when in her society, not to go too far. I was obliged to make more of it than I wished, and this to the last hour of the last day.

"Do you know, I had not been three days alone before I began to have a feeling of dislike for her. Perhaps that was bad of me.

"Her influence over me lasted beyond the time when we parted. I did not understand that at once, but I have a proof lying before me—the letter you kindly returned to me ; that one in

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

which hurriedly scribbled down something about my impressions of Sofiero. I shall keep it, that shall be my punishment. I have just read it through again. You unfortunately have read it also (a thing I shall never forgive myself for) : could you conceive any letter of mine more unlike me ?

"I don't know why, but I see Tora through the whole thing. I can't explain it. I have never been able to write to her since. Here, where everything is more formal, and where there is no room for sentimental confidence, it offends the taste even to be reminded of such a thing. It would almost be like going out before one was *coiffée* and without one's dress. Perhaps I am too severe, the blame for being so must fall on the tone of conversation at home. I am so often reminded of that unfortunate girl by some Germans here ; they are very like her, though she was the worst I have ever met.

"Yet how clever she was ! I never have a new dress, or study a pattern, or indeed see any new fashion which interests me, without remembering her. Could she not become a milliner ? If I could do anything to help her in that direction, it would be a pleasure to me, otherwise what is she to do ? I really am dreadfully sorry for her.

"I have lots to tell you, I see something fresh nearly every day ; but this affair of Tora has put me in such a *triste* state of mind that I do not feel inclined to begin anything more cheerful. Poor Tora ! You must give her my love, but don't say anything about what I have written to you in



## WAR

confidence, it would wound her without doing good to any of us. Fate has raised a dividing wall between us, so there is no need. Give my love to Tinka, Fru Rendalen, and all who ask after your affectionate, and, in other respects, very happy,

“MILLA ENGEL.”



## VII

# THE FIGHT ITSELF

### CHAPTER I

#### IN BOTH CAMPS

AFTER Milla's letter, Nora disappeared from the sitting-rooms—nay, for several days she was unable to go on with her work; she was quite overcome. First Tora in her way, now Milla in hers. It was too much for her. She had held the principal place in their mutual life, she had believed all they said, and made herself one with them.

Latterly she had endured mockery, not least from her father, ever since her presidentship had laid her open to ridicule; she had tried to bear this, but after Milla's letter she gave in. As we know, she had every now and then before this time felt her life shallow and superficial. But after this! Over and over again she reviewed the thoughts and actions of her companions since she had been here. She was confronted everywhere by lofty aims, but lamentable weakness when it came to deeds; not least in herself. They had all been easily raised to enthusiasm, yet were unutterably volatile, their heads full of nonsense, vanity and jealousy. In many, was an

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

evil desire which befooled them under a thousand disguises. They were disfigured by the instinct, inherited through a thousand years, to submit themselves to the wishes of the stronger.

She would no longer be the leader of the Society. She could hardly resolve to remain a member of it. It did no good, and she had more than enough to do for herself, for she saw in herself natural gifts, but no stability.

"Genius with disorder," as her father called her mother. Just then the relations between her parents were not good. Nora clung to the school, absolutely hid herself there.

Christmas came; she was free and could have gone home, but she begged to be allowed to stay. She was very lonely; Tinka was engrossed with Frederik Tygesen, who was at home for Christmas; the engagement was now almost openly acknowledged. Anna Rogne was studying philosophy with Rendalen, and was so learned and so happy that she did not at all suit her. Very often, when any one came in, Nora was sitting crying. She had a quick way of brushing away her tears; her hand moved across her eyes as though she were driving away a fly. Then she would smile cheerfully at whoever came—no matter who it was; the reason for her distress was evidently not in the house.

Nora down-hearted! Nora overcome! They all knew that that happened occasionally, but now it had continued so long. Of course she was asked about it, but she at once became so high and mighty that no one asked her a second time.

At last, just after Christmas, came the long-expected letter from Tora. Rendalen invited all her friends in the school to hear it. The beginning of the letter at once explained what they wished to know; it reminded them of something that they recalled at once, but had not up to this time understood; how Tora had been affected the first time that she and Fürst met, that morning up at the gymnasium, when she was excited and overdone; how he had walked slowly up, fixing his eyes upon hers and nailed her to the spot, till he stood by her side. The agitated style of the letter, the constant interpolations, re-writings, protestations, gave a striking image of Tora. If she had not always been careful, she was touchingly so now, perhaps just because she knew that, not without grounds, they might be doubtful about her in this particular. Anna Rogne read the letter aloud to them all; she knew it by heart, and delivered it in a rather precise, but even tone of voice; thus read, the letter touched them. Its many turns and additions came out oddly. The protestations shone out like sunlight through clouds—one laughed, and was moved at the same time.

During the reading, Rendalen sat looking at Nora. He had just heard that she would not continue to be the head of the "Society," and he felt that he must break through the restraint which he had put upon himself.

While the others were discussing the letter among themselves, he sat down near Nora, and talked long and eagerly with her—until some of

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

the others noticed that she often passed her hand across her eyes. The conversation ceased ; looks were turned towards them. Fru Rendalen proposed that they should have some music ; she asked her son to play something. " With pleasure," he said, but remained sitting thoughtfully.

" What should you say to my first endeavouring to combat the depression which often overcomes a woman when her eyes are opened to her inheritance of frailty ? "

Yes, they would all like to hear him.

He said he had been reminded that evening of how, more than a year ago, he had spoken at a meeting of the Society in a very desponding manner on heredity. This had really only arisen from a feeling of depression. His opinion of heredity was simply this, that one inherited quality combats another. One need not be so desponding. In the course of time all families are so mixed together that any legacy of evil (which one must strive to reduce to impotence) has almost always beside it a legacy of good which may be strengthened by use. That is to say, never be guided by chance, but let the teacher first, and ourselves afterwards, be watchful betimes.

He was so imbued with the subject that he was able, on the spot, to give a number of historical examples. He added others to them, gathered from his own and others' experience. The question had occupied him from his boyhood. In his own family there was a predisposition to insanity. Every case which he could trace showed plainly that only when the weakness which led to insanity

## IN BOTH CAMPS

had been allowed to increase, did this infirmity break out. When this weakness was opposed by the intermixture of fresh blood, by education and self-education, that person was saved for his work in life. Heredity was not a destiny, but a condition.

It was sometimes said that knowledge and surroundings were no help. But what did the letter tell us which had just been read? First, most distinctly, that Tora had an inherited weakness; next, that if Miss Hall had given her lecture four months sooner, Tora at any rate would have been saved, "So we may well say, 'Help one another,' by knowledge and fearless counsel. Woman has been condemned to isolation. Man has sought fellowship and knowledge. Only by fellowship will women teach each other to fight for their own cause.

" 'The inward development,' is subject to crises, and then intercourse is burdensome; with this each one must deal as she can. But there is no doubt that we advance our inward development only by doing our duty."

That was all; but from it, and the conversation which succeeded it, was formed, from that evening, the strongest bond of union among all the women who, in the time that followed, supported the cause of the school in the town. From this evening also dated the influence of the "Society" over the school; all discords were subdued before they came to the teachers' ears. Even before this the members of the "Society" were accustomed to go into the different classes

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

to help the more backward pupils before lessons began. This had given them an influence of which they made use. Again, from this evening dated—and in the long run this was the best of all—Rendalen's lectures in the chapel up on the mountain. Every Saturday evening he explained the laws of natural history, illustrating them with pictures and experiments; and every Sunday evening gave sketches of the history of civilisation, when pictures were also exhibited. Niels Hansen defrayed the preliminary expenses, and was always present. Rendalen had begun this partly to gain partisans. He would not "Hang in the wind." But when once he had begun, he became interested in the task which lay before him, and persuaded Miss Hall to lecture every Sunday, between three and four, to the women there. Miss Hall elected to speak alternately on the diseases of children and those of women. She had an immense audience, and this was greatly owing to the fact that the quick-witted young lady at once declared that these diseases, both in women and children, had in no small degree the same origin—men's immoral lives.

But to return to this evening. There are times when human wills, with the projects they have formed, readily unite themselves as though there had never been doubt or separation—a harvest full of promise for a future seed-time. Such a time at "The Estate" was that evening of the twenty-ninth of December. The day was remembered, and often mentioned at a later time. They did not separate till past midnight, and the



IN BOTH CAMPS

departing guests sang as they went down the avenue.

As Fru Rendalen was undressing she heard, to her astonishment, Tomas going out; she half opened the door.

"My dear boy, where are you going?"

"It is such splendid starlight."

Fru Rendalen could not be called romantic; she went to the window and peered out from behind the curtain; yes, it was starlight, quite so. There are so many things that a schoolmistress has to think of, that there is no time left for the stars. Yet the tone in which he spoke of them! Tomas had not for some time seemed so happy as this evening. He had never before stayed with them the whole time, till past midnight! He really was beginning to take root, or was it through combativeness? He was terribly like the Kurts.

"Fru Rendalen?"

"Good gracious!"

"It is only I."

"Why, my dear Nora, are you not in bed? I am coming to the door. What! you are still dressed?"

"It is such lovely starlight."

"Tomas has gone out."

"Yes, I heard him. Oh, Fru Rendalen!"

"What is it, my dear? Excuse me, I am going to get into bed. That's it!"

"I am so happy."

"Are you? That's right; you were so unhappy a little while ago."

THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

"All that Rendalen said——"

"Yes, he was capital this evening."

"Fru Rendalen, do you think I might thank him for it? Might I venture?"

"Why, of course! What do you mean, my dear?"

"I could not rest till I had written——"

"Written? When you live in the same house——"

"I thought I would get it sent to him this evening."

"To-night, you mean; you can wait just as well till to-morrow, my dear, and then you can say it to him. You know Tomas is peculiar."

"But this evening he is in a good humour, eh?"

"You want to take a letter into his room?"

"Oh, no; not I myself. Fancy if Pastor Vangen were to come, or Rendalen himself!"

"Would you like me to?"

"Dear Fru Rendalen!"

"Get me my spectacles, and let me see."

"Here they are."

Fru Rendalen read:

"HERR RENDALEN,

"I cannot go to bed without thanking you. I did not want you to think I did not wish to do so. I did not find an opportunity for it. Thank you.

"Most humbly,

"NORA TUE."

Fru Rendalen's bed creaked; she got up.

"I will put it on his table by the candle. Have

## IN BOTH CAMPS

you the envelope ? There, that's all right. Have you directed it ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Just give me my skirt and slippers—that's it. It was pretty of you, Nora. Yes, he was very good this evening : that's it ; ” and she trotted off.

As she again got into bed she said : “ But, Nora, why did you not thank him at once ? ”

Instead of answering, Nora put her head down to Fru Rendalen, kissed her a good-night, and went lightly off. She turned back. “ Shall I put out your candle ? ”

“ No ; good-night, my dear.”

The winter passed by, and they began to hope that the war might pass off as well as it had done before.

But when minds are excited they require but little to aid them. The political strife was now at its height ; the so-called people's party had started a newspaper ; the *Spectator* seemed to them to have attained the measure of iniquity. Between this paper and the new one, the *Independence*, a fierce antagonism quickly arose, which became most trying to the nerves.

In the spring, on Rendalen's birthday, the “ Society ” hit upon the unlucky idea of having a large flag-staff set up on the tower, from which waved, on the great day, an enormous Norwegian flag without the “ Union.” The girls had never thought about the old quarrel over the flag, but Rendalen had showed the whole school pictures of the flags of all nations, and explained to them that, from old times, the Union was only

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

used by States which were incorporated one in the other, such as Scotland and Ireland with England, or the United States of America, and this was what the world understood by a Union, notwithstanding the differing colours of the two flags. "Thus a Union gave us, the smaller country, the appearance of having been incorporated into Sweden."

This flag was looked upon as a demonstration ; it was "bringing politics into the school." Rendalen forbade its being again hoisted ; he wished to avoid new quarrels. But this was of no avail ; angry spirits were roused ; all the old accusations were gone over again in the columns of the *Spectator* and at the club. The Town Bailiff suddenly came forward with a gift of five thousand kroner to found a new school without politics, with unbiassed instruction, without a method which was antagonistic to morality. The donor, he said, wished the gift to be anonymous. He had been most decided on that point.

The Town Bailiff and his wife each added one thousand kroner. It was he who had before proposed that a new school should be started ; now he came prominently forward ; he had been scandalised. The anonymous gift was precisely the same sum as that given by Fru Engel. Was Consul Engel the donor ? Several amounts were subscribed on the spot, but they were not large !

Tomas Rendalen at once put himself up for the club, as did several of his friends, Karl Vangen and Niels Hansen among them. All these were

## IN BOTH CAMPS

elected at a very full meeting, Niels Hansen, however, with only a small majority; the club was partly built on his ground, and it was thanks to this that he was elected at all. Rendalen's election, on the contrary, was left open. It is true that the rules declared that every admission should be decided at the first meeting, but happily there were a number of lawyers present, and this rule was so construed that it was decided that *first* really meant *next*.

The next meeting was largely attended. The Town Bailiff opened it with the astounding declaration that Rendalen must be kept out, for "peace" sake.

A number of men had been sent to this meeting by their respective wives to vote for Rendalen, and one of these obedient husbands made the mild remark that "peace" had already been disturbed by the Town Bailiff's proposal. The last-named gentleman became so exasperated at this that he would not continue, and Consul Engel's solicitor, the best speaker in the town, found it necessary to come to his assistance. His name was Bugge, and he was extremely eloquent. Several solicitors followed him, and all talked more or less about peace, morals, and Christianity—subjects which they, at all events, knew by *hearsay*.

Karl Vangen asked what on earth these great questions had to do with the matter in hand, whether Rendalen should, or should not, be a member of a social club? But Karl Vangen had hardly stood up before the Town Bailiff pulled a

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

long list out of his pocket. He asked if he might put some questions to Pastor Vangen ?

"With pleasure."

"First question—Is it true that Herr Rendalen has said that history cannot well be taught to people who believe that the world began as Paradise and its inhabitants as perfect beings ?"

Breathless silence. Karl Vangen began a little hesitatingly : "Yes, that is true, but——"

"I beg your pardon, but I have the word," interrupted the Town Bailiff.

"No," observed one of the "husbands"; "Pastor Vangen undoubtedly has the word. It was he who was interrogated."

Hereon there was a great uproar ; the real men were, Heaven be praised, in the majority ; the "husbands" had by no means such strong throats.

"Second question—Is it true that Rendalen has said——"

"But dear me!" called out Niels Hansen ; "is Rendalen to join the club to be confirmed ?"

A roar of laughter followed. The whole room, without distinction of parties, gave way to immense merriment. The Town Bailiff paused. As soon as peace was restored he began again. "Second question—Is it true——" The laughter began again, worse than before. The Town Bailiff stopped abruptly, and left the room ; Karl Vangen now began. His friend Rendalen was of the opinion that history lessons ought conscientiously to describe all movements just as they were, and therefore the development of Christianity as well ; but to describe the life of mankind as a

## IN BOTH CAMPS

work of God's dispensation belongs to Church history.

"Is he not a Christian, then?" asked Bugge.

"We have nothing to do with that here," called out Niels Hansen.

"Is he not a Christian?" repeated Bugge.

"No, he is not a Christian," answered Vangen, colouring like a little boy.

"The blockhead," muttered Niels Hansen, and he left too.

"Then he has deceived us," shouted Bugge.

"He should have said that from the first," observed another.

Several shouted at once. There was disturbance, noise, delight. All the "husbands" were frightened, and held their tongues.

A quiet, well-to-do man stood up: "Yes, I could almost have guessed that Rendalen was not a Christian. Women to take the same position as men, that is against Christianity."

Pastor Vangen then again came forward, and he now spoke warmly. Rendalen's actions had been perfectly honourable. So long as Christianity supports mankind's moral consciousness, every school director should see that it was given to the children, as truly and heartily as possible. And it was thus that Rendalen had acted. It was only to be lamented that his instrument was so feeble, for that instrument was himself. But he could assure the meeting that he had full opportunity of doing all of which he was capable.

This made a good impression, and for a moment

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

it seemed as though the discussion would end there. But the man who had spoken before, again rose; it was evident that it was a serious matter with him. "If Tomas Rendalen had said this when he gave a lecture up at the gymnasium two years ago—if he had said, 'I am not a Christian'—there would have been no school."

At the moment Karl Vangen could not think of any reply to this; it almost seemed to him to be true. The voting began immediately, and Rendalen was refused admittance by an overwhelming majority.

"Not," as Bugge observed, "because Rendalen did not believe, for they were tolerant there, but because he had not behaved honourably."

As soon as he could do so, Rendalen gathered his friends, and any others who liked to join them, at a meeting at the gymnasium. It was a very full one. This was a fight which every one understood, and in which most of them took an interest. As well as this, the special woman-question was far more opened up than it had been two years ago; Rendalen was able to speak quite freely. He began by declaring that religion had been made use of as a "last resort." He had been expecting it for a long time. The audience was given an amusing description of the moral and Christian responsibility of the club, enveloped in clouds of tobacco smoke round the card-tables and punch-bowls, and of the virtue of the men, which consisted in a strong demand for virtue—in women, which was an advantage to themselves.

A work to obtain equality between men and



## IN BOTH CAMPS

women could not be called "Enmity to Christianity." Therefore notorious interpolations of Judaism into Christianity ought not to be sanctioned. If this were done, and the views of woman's position two thousand years ago in Judea were sanctioned—well, in that case, he could tell the Christians that they did not thus destroy the claims of the present day, but themselves. There was no help which he desired so much as that of serious Christians. He considered, too, that the Christian who had no reactionary aims must range himself here with the great French pastor, Pressensé.

As a teacher of history, he had himself endeavoured to point out trustworthily the works of Christianity. As a teacher of natural science, on the contrary, he could not disguise the fact that divers new discoveries were in opposition to the Jewish traditions; an honest teacher of natural science in most Christian schools must find himself in the same case. But the principal dogmas—the belief in God and salvation through Christ—remain unmoved.

The Christian beliefs of the school were unfettered, and directed by a clergyman, whom they all highly respected. He was clearly in his rights when he demanded that his private beliefs should be left out of the question. Indeed, it was his duty to demand this where the question was notoriously merely introduced for the sake of making confusion.

This time the current of opinion against the school was divided by a brisk counter-current.

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

It was a good sign that Miss Hall's public lectures at the school were still well attended.

But what would Rendalen, or his eager opponents, have said, if they had known that the whole movement, from the moment the flag was hoisted, had been directed from outside? That the best contributions to the *Spectator* had never once been written in the town? That the Town Bailiff was a tool in a light but skilful hand? That the five thousand kroner which had so animated his faculties and morality, and those of his wife, had not come from Consul Engel at all? What would the Town Bailiff, what would lawyer Bugge and his colleagues have said, if they had known that the famous anonymous donor, who had called forth their eloquence, was a rascal who had carefully reckoned on the certainty of these men behaving as they had done, if they believed Consul Engel to be the donor? What would all these worthy men and women, who were fighting for morality and Christianity—what would they have said if they had known that at Stockholm there was a man who reckoned on their zeal and strong prejudices, as well as on the cringing and shrewdness of others, with the same sense of superiority with which we use the wide powers of Nature for the accomplishment of our own ends. But the force of opposition could not be accurately measured from a distance; where women are concerned, it is never easy to calculate; notwithstanding these great exertions, the amount subscribed was small, very, very small.

A mine must therefore be laid, and some of

## IN BOTH CAMPS

this opposition blown up. And this was done. The report of Niels Fürst's engagement to Milla Engel had died out ; it was now renewed, and, with it, the exasperation of the whole woman's party. Angry, scornful remarks were flung over the whole town from Rendalen's circle ; they stabbed and wounded both the families, Fürst's and Engel's. Consul Engel was especially offended by Rendalen having said, "All the Consul's mistresses ought to attend on the wedding-day as bridesmaids." Engel gave Rendalen to understand that till then he had held himself aloof from the business. Now, if the wedding took place, the new school should be remembered both as regarded a house and funds.

The person who brought this information to Rendalen received out of hand for answer : "Yes, it is wise of the Consul to put *if* before it, for there is not a church in the town in which Milla Engel will dare to be married to Niels Fürst." This was really going too far ; other people saw this beside the Consul. He now felt himself compelled to act.

The fact was that Milla had not engaged herself again to Niels Fürst—the report was untrue, a mere trick. Up to this time the Consul had not mixed himself in the matter ; in such affairs one must be circumspect. He had contented himself by sending her cuttings from the *Spectator*, small reports, stories, and so on. He had also asked others to write ; she no longer corresponded with any one at "The Estate." Now, however, the Consul wrote to her himself. He was so fortu-

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

nate as to be able to send her a cutting from a Lutheran weekly paper, in which a highly esteemed clergyman analysed the proposition that women have the same right to demand chastity from men, as men have from women: the decided logical result of his analysis being that the proposition was unchristian.

"And now," wrote her father, "what further objection can there be? You love Niels Fürst? If there is any condition which you wish to make in regard to your marriage, name it, my child. The consideration which you and I possess demands that you should be married in accordance with our position in your native town."

Milla complied. If her dear mother's favourite clergyman, old Dean Green, who had carried her mother's gift to the school, would perform the ceremony, he *himself*, her father, might fix the wedding-day at once. So old Green, the most respected man in the town, was to give his countenance to their side? The Consul felt that this was highly improbable. He wrote to Niels Fürst, that now he had but little hope.

Fürst was not of the same opinion. Most old people incline towards compromise. He gave some instructions to his brother-in-law, and, after the latter had paid a visit to the Dean, Fürst wrote to the Consul that, after all, things might be more hopeful than he had imagined. The Consul was off at once. It may well be that he was astonished when the old man said decidedly that the attacks on the school ought now to end. A peculiar smile passed over the Consul's face as he lamented

## IN BOTH CAMPS

that he did not possess sufficient influence. The old man met smile with smile ; there was no need for influence, he believed. And thus the matter rested.

It was on a Friday morning that printed invitations were sent out to Consul Engel's friends, in this and the neighbouring towns, asking them to honour him by their presence at his daughter's marriage with Lieutenant Niels Fürst.

The wedding was fixed for the following Monday week, at four o'clock in the afternoon, at the Cross Church. It was being hurried on.

To a few of his oldest friends the Consul added in writing that the spiritual guide of his family, his beloved wife's friend, Dean Green, would do the young people the honour of uniting them.

On the same day, about dinner-time, the Consul walked along the quays just as all the business men were coming to, or from, them. Every one greeted him with beaming faces and with great cordiality, and those who were sufficiently intimate pressed his hand laughingly.

Every one had been annoyed that Rendalen should wish to prescribe who was or was not to marry—precisely like Max Kurt in the old days—he, a miserable fellow, crippled with debts, with a great school which might tumble about his ears any day. The news of the wedding, and that Dean Green was to perform the ceremony, was carried by Saturday's steamers up and down the coast ; it sprang ashore on the islands, was heard at the watering-places, and slipped away through the woods far inland. It brought excite-

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

ment everywhere. One party rejoiced ; the other was immensely scandalised. But there was not a woman in either party who did not declare that she should go to the town for the day to see it all. The children begged to go too. Mimic weddings took place in the "Groves" and about on the rocks, where an old Dean Green, in a short frock and with bare arms, intoned the service over the bridal pair in a trembling voice.

Somewhat more laggardly the news came that the donor of the five thousand kroner to the new school had withdrawn his gift ; that Consul Engel had condemned all the uproar about the school ; if it were carried further, he would be obliged to support the recipients of his wife's legacy : her memory demanded no less of him.

Had a compromise been effected ? Was Milla to return home as the Angel of Peace ?

Some people were incensed ; some laughed ; some few, including the Town Bailiff, would not give in ; but how could a new school be started without Consul Engel ? And when in cold blood the advantages were considered, who did not at last wish for peace ? The daughter of the school's benefactress married to Niels Fürst—that was in itself victory, and that sufficed. One or two marriages of this sort, especially amongst the most advanced pupils at the school, and the good old constitution, the good old distribution of virtue and authority between the sexes, would remain unshaken. Rendalen, the Society, and Miss Hall might stick to their views if they liked. Tora was never mentioned now.

## IN BOTH CAMPS

Milla was to be married on a Monday, and to leave the same night ; she was to arrive the evening of the previous Friday ; she would not be three days in the town ! That did not imply a vast amount of courage, her quondam friends considered. Not one of them went down to the landing-place to meet her. But there was no need for them, for, notwithstanding a drenching rain, it was densely crowded. The wedding for which she was returning, even if nothing special had happened previously, would have been the most important that any one could remember. The bridegroom, aided by the unusually large fortune which he would command, would be able to enter upon a career at Court which would lead to the highest positions in the country. Every one who knew him described him as a "born politician ;" not very flattering to politicians, but that I cannot help.

The bride was a beauty capable of becoming a thorough woman of the world. Besides, she was to remain so short a time at home, that every one must secure a glimpse of her.

Flags were hoisted everywhere, but they drooped along the masts in quite a shamefaced manner, mere patches of colour—the beautiful green-clad mountains at the head of the bay were shrouded in fog. Houses, gardens, sea, seemed to lie in a casket whose cover was the grey woolly mist.

The house-roofs were no longer red-brown but black ; the houses not white, but ashen grey ; not yellow, but a sooty colour ; all the tints were

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

subdued by several shades, the houses themselves seemed to crowd closer together, and appeared wonderfully small and crooked to the girl fresh from Paris, who stood, in the rain, on the deck of the steamer which was gliding in among the islands. Only the great building up at "The Estate" and the formal stone walls by the side of the avenue loomed out from their encircling trees; but the red bricks looked dark and ominous, the window-frames a pitchy black, the dumpy frowning tower seemed to stand on the watch; as they drew nearer a huge white flag-staff could be seen on it without a flag. "The Estate" lay hemmed in, wide and menacing. Milla's glances wandered down from it towards the Cross Church with its slender spire, from which the joyful soul of Max Kurt had ascended to heaven; not that Milla thought of this, but under that spire she would, notwithstanding . . . But, good Heavens, what is that? all that moving mass of black on the landing-place up to the very walls of the houses? Umbrellas? Absolutely nothing but umbrellas! What could that mean? From all the information which had been sent to her, and perhaps even more from what had not, she was quite convinced that if things were not all that she could wish, yet still there was peace here now, and no danger. Dean Green's authority protected her, and she herself did not wish to do any one an injury. But at the sight of all these people, a remembrance rushed to her mind of the way in which poor Fru Rendalen had been received, when she had returned from her journey with Tora. Milla turned



## IN BOTH CAMPS

deadly white ; a fearful dread seized her. Although she struggled against it with all her might, she could not help trembling ; her knees trembled so that her whole body shook ; she had to support herself, to sit down. In the short space of five minutes she went through more—ah ! more than when her mother died, for then a comforter hovered over her ; the gloom was lightened by the hope of a future meeting. Now she felt separated, cut off, plunged into an abyss !

A sound of pitiless laughter surrounded her ; people were trying to grasp her hands—where could she creep to ?

Her father was on board, but at the moment was down below collecting the luggage and paying the steward. He heard the vessel swing noisily in towards the quay, and then cheers from hundreds of voices, repeated again and again. He came on deck, and his daughter rushed towards him, seized him, pressed herself against him, her lips quivering, and trembling in every limb. She who was ordinarily so self-contained, was in a state of nervous excitement.

"Why, Milla ? They are calling out 'Hurrah for the bride !'"

"Hold me," she whispered. "Let me collect myself, I did not know, I thought——" And she cried—ah, how she cried !

Happily there was some obstruction at the quay, and a little time elapsed before they were alongside. The captain stormed ; as Milla listened, the strain relaxed ; so that when she stepped on shore, leaning on her father's arm, though still

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

pale and trembling slightly, she could smile from under her coquettish hat as she passed in her charming travelling dress. Tears were becoming to her.

What ringing cheers for the bride, for Consul Engel! The crowd was almost all composed of men, and there was no one whom she knew well; but, yes, there are Fürst's sister and Fru Gröndal and Wingard, and several others. There are flowers and welcomes, friends pressing forward, and cheer upon cheer, and more welcomes—nothing but homage and delighted greetings. More flowers still. The carriage was almost full! She took her seat in it—the same carriage in which thirteen or fourteen months ago she had driven here with Tora. She had no time to recall it. This was splendid, perfect!

At a little past two the next morning a *skyss kærre*\* drove slowly up the avenue to the school. A closely veiled lady sat in it with a child in her arms. She was expected, for Rendalen came down at once to meet her, and take her up the steps, at the top of which stood Fru Rendalen. It was a touching meeting.

\* Hired posting carriage.

## CHAPTER II

### A GALA DAY IN TOWN AND HARBOUR

BETWEEN three and four o'clock in the afternoon, two unlucky printer's devils trudged off, each on his own beat, with the *Spectator*. They threw it into the passages, left it on the steps, pushed it under the gates. They must hurry on! The church was full long ago; by this time the market-place was packed from one end to the other.

When the worthy burghers returned home and found the *Spectator*, they read the following:—  
“As we go to press our town presents a most festal appearance. Naval Lieutenant Niels Fürst and Fröken Emilie Engel, members of two of the oldest and most respected families in the town, are to-day to be united at four o'clock, in the Cross Church, by our venerable Dean. From the country, where all the families who have the means are now enjoying their summer holiday, there has been an immense influx of people to witness the ceremony. As well as this, our streets are filled by a considerable number of strangers. It is understood that Consul Engel has received the good wishes of his Majesty, through the High

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

Chamberlain of the Norwegian Court. Consul Engel, on the occasion of this happy event in his family, has presented to the Maternity Hospital the interest of a bequest of ten thousand kroner. The poor of the town will to-day be entertained by the Consul at the poorhouse. Further, we have just received the announcement that, in response to a special appeal, Consul Engel has given two thousand kroner for the thorough restoration of the magnificent organ in the Cross Church. A gala day in town and harbour!"

At midday a refreshing breeze had fanned the glowing streets; now only a capricious puff stirred the flags, and each time they blew out they formed a mass of colour over the town, and the whole length of the harbour; several ships were covered with flags from deck to masthead. A barque, the most gaily decorated of all, is hauled out to fire a salute, to begin the moment that the pair are united, and to continue until the bride's carriage draws up before Engel's house. Another salute is to be fired during the dinner.

The most perfect weather, over mountain and hill and sea and town! How cheerful the town looked in the sunshine! The small blocks of houses with their provincial decorations, surrounded by the pavement of cobble-stones, cleanly swept and warmed by the sunshine.

The shadows were very heavy; when any quiet pedestrian emerged from them into the white glare of the street, he had the same feeling as in old times the wick of a tallow candle must have had when it escaped from the snuffers again. The

## A GALA DAY IN TOWN AND HARBOUR

cats dozed in the sunshine, but with one eye open, for there were a hundred idlers about to-day. The gutters, generally the route for many a toy-boat, were now dry; the newspaper boys jumped backwards and forwards across them, as they went from one empty house to another. Everything was clean and charming and quiet. Only in the streets by the quays the smell of decayed wood, salt herrings, train oil, and "such like," prevailed. There was work going on there too; festival at the masthead, toil on deck and down below. In the rest of the town most work was over by three o'clock.

A train of young people could be seen trudging down from "the mountain" towards the marketplace, succeeded by groups of women, both old and young. They knew a little about the two families which were to be united, those good people on the mountain!

What a glorious day! The land breeze now and again sent "cat's-paws" across the harbour, which lost themselves in the blue grey water out by the islands. The open sea beyond lay wide and peaceful.

And how lovely were the wood-clothed mountains and hillsides, in the full colours of both pines and leafy trees, with the grass below ready for its second mowing. The greens were deeper than those of spring and with less variety. On the road below the churchyard was a long train of pedestrians; those country folk who lived nearest the town, toiled in just at the last to get a glimpse of the show—the men in front, the women fol-

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

lowing. A fussy little steamer shoots out from among the islands, snorting and puffing—she is behind time; she is bringing people from the nearest town, and has a horn quartet on board.

In the sunshine, the mountain seemed to those approaching it from the sea, to rear itself from the water like an anthill, but the resemblance was spoiled as one came nearer, although its small houses still looked like linen and stockings put out to dry. Close by, it became a curious breeding place for human sea-birds. All the children of the upper classes in the town looked at it with the greatest envy, especially on a day like this, for the flags excited their imagination.

Every now and then, heads were turned towards "The Estate." Every pane of glass in the great red-brick building shone in the sunlight, but no flag was hoisted. As late as half-past three, Consul Engel, smoking a cigar, went up to the top attic to see if the flag were hoisted; Emilie was just coming down the attic stairs; she was fully dressed, except that she still wore her *peignoir*. She coloured when she met her father.

"What are you doing up here, my child?"

"I was looking——" She slipped past him without saying for what. No flag on the tower! The Consul remained there smoking. If there had been a flag without the "Union" to-day it would have been most suitable.

From the time it was reported that Tora Holm was at "The Estate" with her child, which report was heard early as Monday morning, an avalanche hung on the mountain ready to overwhelm them.

## A GALA DAY IN TOWN AND HARBOUR

This was the cause of all the Consul's generosity ; if any one but asked for more, he gave it.

He had had two sleepless nights ! Was it true that Rendalen had sent a letter to the old Dean couched in most respectful terms, but in which he said that if this were "peace," it was once more shown that peace belonged to Satan, but that the fight was God's ?

"What did they contemplate—a scandal ?" the whole town was asking.

Tora's appearance with her child just now was in itself a sentence—she must have an undaunted conscience ; something would certainly happen.

There was no answer to this fact : Tora Holm had dared to come here ; Rendalen and Fru Rendalen believed in her—*all* her friends believed in her.

All the incidents of Niel's bachelor life were recalled—that is to say, those which related to *that* part of the country ; as a general thing, people would say what a devil of a fellow Niels Først was, and stroll away laughing. The laughter ceased now. In Tora's neighbourhood such stories took a different complexion. Some of them seemed absolutely repulsive.

And the father-in-law ! His past also was brought up again. None of the stories dealt with daring seductions, unexpected, astounding conquests ; no open scandal—Heaven forbid ! but certain quiet intrigues were known of, often one or two at a time.

Expensive presents and small annuities had been heard of as well. They knew of children

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

who passed for his, and who were his living image. It all came up again now; even "indiscretions" of twenty years ago and more, were recalled. Such little provincial towns have pitiless memories.

It had been but a short time previously that every one rejoiced that Fru Engel's gift had been opposed by a similar one, so that the "indecent" up at the school might come to an end. Now, as the women flocked into the town (which they began to do as early as Sunday), and the juniors at once hurried up to "The Estate," or collected in groups in the streets, a remembrance of Fru Engel's beautiful funeral filled the minds of all. What the daughter was about to accomplish was, in reality, disrespectful to her mother's memory.

Emilie herself was the only one who did not know that Tora was there. Fürst had arrived on Saturday morning, and had heard it at once, but he and her father believed that Tora had come to force herself upon Milla; they kept most careful watch that neither Tora herself, nor a letter or message, or indeed any sign from her, could come without being intercepted. The friends of the house had received their instructions, and beside they consisted entirely of members of the two families. The bridesmaids arrived in the town on Sunday—they were relatives, and, with hardly an exception, from a distance.

Milla knew nothing except that the other party had been defeated and ruined, there would be nothing now but peace. Her father had the firm intention of helping the school; it would work



## A GALA DAY IN TOWN AND HARBOUR

well enough if some of the ideas were abandoned. Milla felt especially grateful for this promise of her father. Why should not they all be friends together? "That is what we shall be," Fürst had assured her. The school party had made peace: old Dean Green was a proof of it. "Yes, old Dean Green was a proof of it," repeated Milla to herself, whenever she felt any doubt.

On Sunday she went to church and heard him, it did her so much good; and in the afternoon she went with her father to call on him. How kind he was! He exhorted her to be patient; we cannot alter the world, but we can set a good example; that was what her mother had done. Milla was deeply touched. "Ah! if only every one were good!"

Her father had never been so loving to her as now. His increasing kindness reminded her of the time when her mother was ill, and then the great amount of his charity; he could not have done her honour in a more delicate or beautiful way. Fürst was always amusing, and his way of being so was so very superior. He told stories of the Court, and terribly malicious ones they were; Fürst was so pleasant and clever, Milla felt that she was really fortunate—that is to say, except for a slight sense of want, a tiny sensation of mistrust—just so much as to oblige her, at the last moment, to go up to the top attic, to see if there were a flag on the tower. But there was nothing. Perhaps no one was at home! That would be the best thing for both parties. They could find each other another time.

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

Now to put on her wedding dress! If Tora could have seen it! Poor Tora! But such things will happen when one is not careful. Emilie asked her maid to take care that the folds hung properly over her tournure. At the same moment Fru Wingard came in with the bridal wreath.

Every one who came from the adjoining streets into the market-place, observed something red against the open door of the church, the outer one to the left. It was a red shirt, worn by a tall sailor. The church attendants tried to get him away, but in vain; all round were ladies who would willingly have occupied his place, but he answered that he had as good a right to stand there as any one else, which he undoubtedly had. He did not belong to the town, no one knew him, a tattoo mark on his hand showed that he had been at sea—indeed, he said so himself. He was in a timber ship now—she was a large vessel.

With this exception there were nothing but ladies, old and young, on the steps, down below, and in every direction, all who had not found room in the church. Every time the inner door opened, affording a glimpse of the interior, one saw, on both sides, right down to the door, nothing but ladies—nothing but bonnets, with flowers, feathers, and veils. A solitary uncovered masculine head in one of the rows of chairs showed up like a single late gooseberry or black currant on the branch in autumn. If the departed Herr Max could have looked up from the chancel where

## A GALA DAY IN TOWN AND HARBOUR

he lay, it would have been "a goodly sight" for his woman-loving eyes, especially as the younger ones were all in the front places—they had been most eager in securing them.

Almost all the parasols which were to be seen on the market-place were either on the steps, or round about them, a many-coloured moving shield-like roof under which endless stories and laughter went on. Every one thought the donation to the Maternity Charity *too* felicitous. That Engel, who had so much tact, could—— But to be sure that was because Fru Wingaard was the patroness—she had wheedled it out of him, the minx!

On either side of the steps, each one the centre of a group, stood those two sisters of doubtful character who had kept the club and the hotel until they had been obliged to relinquish them in favour of Engel's housekeeper. They least of all had reason to spare Engel or his guests for the day, the magnates of the coast towns.

Nearest to these stood another knot of women who had not had so much time to find places. There were few parasols here, but bonnets and aprons, and some of the younger ones even bare-headed. There was whispering, tittering, and giggling!

No solemnity, no gravity, no authority, not the least what is usual in a provincial town. Even where the darker groups of men were collected, there was no seriousness or "decorum," as the Town Bailiff would have said, and indeed as he did say when, at a quarter before four, he joined the guests, in full uniform, and with his

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

wife on his arm. The guests indulged in witticisms and laughter, the result of which was not impressive ; all the people looked at them with amused glances as though they were comrades. The town was unrecognisable. When two boys contrived to clamber on to the chimney of one of the houses opposite the church, all clapped their hands and shouted. This had just occurred as the Town Bailiff arrived. Amid the guests immediately following him came the organist, very drunk. He was a young Swabian, who three or four years ago came to the town in the course of a musical tour, and there remained. The then organist had recently died—the organ was a marvellous one ; beside which there was excellent sea-bathing. He was a soft, fantastic, thoroughly musical man, who as a rule was every one's favourite, and who had more to do than he could manage, but who on a holiday "*Wenn Konstantinople erobet worden ischt*," as he expressed himself, got drunk. This occurred but seldom, but when it was the case he did anything which took his fancy.

This culminated when one day a home missionary was speaking from the chancel steps on the subject of sin, and the organist, noticing that every one was yawning, began to play the organ till it roared ! It was pretended that the missionary made such very long pauses that the organist had been misled by the longest of them.

To-day he had conceived the happy idea of going gaily to Consul Engel, and asking him for some money for the organ, and he received a cheque on the spot. So "*Konstantinople*" had "*erobet*

*worden*" again, and champagne corks flew! Who liked might drink with him. He came up, beaming with happiness and swinging his arms about. Every one laughed, and he laughed with them. He arrived just after the Town Bailiff and his wife. They looked as stiff as though the organist had yoked them and was driving them into the church. Great commotion was now caused by an attempt to drive a carriage through the crowd. Up to this time every one had come on foot. There was no room for carriages here, they cried, and turned sullen; the police had to interfere. In the carriage sat a pretty lively lady of uncertain age, by the side of a somewhat stout gentleman with a remarkably shaped head and a supercilious expression. Facing the lady sat an older man with a red face, heavy moustache and imperial, and wearing a number of orders; he talked incessantly, as though they were all three in a closed room where no one could see them. They did not belong to the town; no one knew them until the carriage-door was opened, and the man with the orders led the lady forward. Then the hotel-keeper's wife said that he was a Consul-General from Christiania; the lady was not his wife, but that of the gentleman who was walking beside them—Consul Garman, of the firm of Garman and Worse. Soon after these arrived two other strangers, Consuls Bernick and Riis. The first-named invariably attended funerals with a stick in his hand; the other always wore his order of St. Olaf when he went to a ball. Several important magnates followed; some with their wives,

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

some without—millionaires in the herring, timber, or ice trade. The monotony of the black coats was broken by the full uniform of the Sheriff—he was without his wife, and in company with a gouty old General, a relation of Fürst. Besides these, there were Government officials and merchants mingled together, most of them with their wives, who hung on their husbands' arms like well-filled costly baskets; the husbands were quite eclipsed. Absolute silence gradually spread upwards from the lower end of the market-place, like oil over troubled waters. The bridegroom was alighting from his carriage, accompanied by his brother-in-law, Consul Wingaard. From another carriage descended two naval officers and two civilians, one of whom was Anton Dösen; these four joined the others.

All the special manœuvres which had brought about that Fürst should to-day approach the Cross Church through the crowd, admired or envied, accompanied or shunned, had been carried out by himself, and up to the present time he had earned the honoured reception of a victor. Still he did not advance with a victor's step—a child could see that at the first glance. He walked forward in the deadliest fear. Tora had never shown herself, had sent neither message nor letter. Neither she nor any of her friends had once been near Consul Engel's house. It was evident that she had not come to talk Emilie over, or to frighten her. What had she come for? What did Rendalen's threat mean? There was danger until he was inside the church; then the sanctity of the build-

## A GALA DAY IN TOWN AND HARBOUR

ing, and the respect due to the old clergyman, must protect him. But here——! His eyes wandered up to the wooded slope above "The Estate." It was an involuntary action. It was not there, but here, that she might appear. She or others. She was not the only one.

His half-closed eyes searched about, his bronzed face was without movement—those strings which moved his lips must have broken! There was no smile now. His fair whiskers hung down and seemed to lengthen his face.

The gait of this dandy had an air of painful caution—each step might lead to disaster. If it did not fall on him, it might await her who would soon follow him. There were sparkling eyes all round and many sharp ones, but no one whom he feared. He was taller than the women; he could see for a good distance, and he looked from side to side—nothing!

He had just put his foot on the first step when the tall sailor stepped forward:

"Ane Marja sends you her compliments."

Those who stood nearer heard it; some who were further away saw the movement.

"Did he say something? What's he say?"

Sibilations whistled across; to those who were furthest away it sounded like *cs-s-s-s-s-s-s* all round the church.

Fürst stood still: his eyes contracted as though fine dust had been thrown into his face; his gloved hand sought for his handkerchief, from which scent was wafted; he blew his nose and walked on, his friends following him. Within it

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

seemed dark after the bright sunshine outside, but in the darkness were eyes, women's eyes!

Here sat Tora's friends. He knew every one in the town by sight, and picked them out one by one. They sat quite in front, excited, restless, threatening. There must be something after all. The great church bell began to ring at that moment, and the bride's carriage was seen at the end of the market-place. What would happen now?

Nora, Tinka, and Anna Rogne were on Fürst's left as he walked up to the chancel. He glanced involuntarily to the opposite side; the first seat was vacant. Every one in the chancel rose as the bridegroom appeared.

There was a stir outside, not merely because the bride's carriage had arrived followed by those of the bridesmaids and Fru Winggaard, but because the coachman in grey livery wanted to drive up to the church door, which seemed impossible. Those in front pressed back to make room, but those behind declined to be pushed against, and exerted their strength, till several people were forced up against the carriage windows. Shrieks, angry words, and orders ensued, and alarm inside the carriages. Engel put his head out of the window, but no one listened to him, and he got out of the carriage. The police were at hand, and eagerly cleared a way for the wealthy magnate, while the bride alighted, as did the bridesmaids; they arranged themselves and walked forward, not where the others had passed; the crowd made way for them in all directions.

Her red-gold hair crowned with myrtle, the



## A GALA DAY IN TOWN AND HARBOUR

bride resembled the most exquisite work of an English Academician. The lines of her face were regular and of an English type, the colouring soft, the skin very white ; the shoulders rather sloping, beautiful—the figure that of a soft delicate young girl.

She walked forward with her head bent, not looking at any one, her hand resting lightly on her father's arm ; just below the level of his order of St. Olaf could be seen her diamond ornament, though only by those just before or above them. An old-fashioned brooch, a valuable one, which was recognised as having been a favourite of her mother, secured the flowers in front of her dress. A puff of wind raised her veil just as they came up the steps ; it streamed out into the face of the sailor, but did not touch it ; a delicate perfume was spread in all directions. How relieved Engel felt as he stood inside the door ! That had been the worst journey he had ever made in his life. Still he had not hurried ; unobtrusive, quiet, benign, he had walked forward ; he kept his eye fixed on one point—was that the needle's eye which must be passed through ?

His handsome regular features looked as though they had never been disturbed by any idea inconsistent with honourable habits, or the good counsel of elders and superiors—nay, as though he had never had knowledge of such things. His had always been a God-fearing house ; three generations had endowed charities. The very perfume which now hung round them might well have come from Palestine.

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

And after all there had been no danger. "We are in church now." The organ pealed under the powerful touch of the drunken Swabian; its full accords blended with Engel's thoughts, and seemed to restore him to himself.

No delight can compare with that of an evenly balanced nature, which, having believed itself in danger, discovers that that danger has been a delusion. This feeling of delight does not spring violently into being, it does not throb, but spreads through the whole man with a soft perfect sense of enjoyment. It resembles the delight of recovery of a good digestion, the smiling view, the delightful odour of some coveted object to which he may now draw near. He raised his face, bearing its best expression, towards the pulpit, calmly receiving all the glances which were directed towards him. He suspected that he was envied, and that tickled him.

What a future lay before them! Just then the bride's hand trembled; he withdrew his eyes quickly from the pulpit. Milla was deadly white, and could not, or would not advance. What was it?

Nora, Tinka, Anna Rogne, and several others were sitting quite in front, just where they must pass. Could there be anything terrifying in that? Every face bore an expression of mingled excitement and mischievous delight, all, all of them, in whatever direction he looked; it infected him as well. What was it? Involuntarily his eyes sought the chancel—if they were but there! There they would be in peace. But all in the

## A GALA DAY IN TOWN AND HARBOUR

chancel were on their feet ; they stood amazed, staring down into the body of the church, not to his side, but to the opposite one. At the same moment his daughter gave a sharp cry and staggered backwards, dragging him with her.

Into the pew furthest from them on the right, through the vestry, and therefore from across the chancel, came Pastor Vangen ; after him, Tora Holm, with something in her arms ; then Miss Hall, then Rendalen. In this order they were just seating themselves as the bridal procession entered the door.

Tora had a double black veil over her face and over what she held in her arms, and this had been securely fastened so that it was only when Miss Hall had helped her that she was able to turn with her face uncovered, and with her child in her arms, towards her who was now advancing.

A storm of anger, reprobation, threats seemed to rise to the very roof, the excitement mingling with the roll of the organ. Milla was almost dragged forward. She came into the chancel little more than a white silk dress among all the other dresses.

A rustle, a stir ! Heads, hands, eyes, bouquets seemed to whirl before her, so that she could not extricate herself, nor find her own seat, her own bouquet, her own handkerchief. Every one crowded round with offers of help, with eau de Cologne, and general disturbance. The last to come was the big red-faced man with the large moustache and the decorations ; he tried to force

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

her own bouquet on her, of which she could not endure the scent. When at last she was free and could draw a breath, she burst into tears. She drew her veil forward. Milla pitied herself so: what a dreadful thing it was that they had done; she felt furious, perfectly furious.

Consul Engel received her first glance. It came on him, following all that he had already gone through, like the last dram which deprives a man of consciousness. He began to wonder with a strange delirious feeling why his trousers felt so thin. Was it really so?

The elegant Fürst sat beside him, holding his hat first in one hand, then in the other, and crossing and uncrossing his legs. It was on account of *him* that all this had happened, and the budding politician was not yet sufficiently accomplished to be able to sit still while he was flayed, cut up, and put in the pot.

Dösen, who was close behind him, pulled the ends of his fair moustache with his white-gloved hands—now left, now right—harder, and harder, and harder. He was marvellously industrious over it. The people in the body of the church saw this white hand moving about under his nose, and thought that he was playing some trick, or making signs to some one, but, they could not find out to whom. The grand folk felt the embarrassment of the situation to be most distressing, but, all the same, they wanted to get a look at the woman with the child—she was so devilish handsome, so foreign-looking. They strained their necks, they craned forward; Consul Bernick himself made his

## A GALA DAY IN TOWN AND HARBOUR

neck as long and distorted as that of a cockerel when it is learning to crow.

To the rest of these mishaps was added the Dean's non-appearance. The vergers went in and out, in and out, with all the solemnity of intense stupidity.

The organist's playing showed signs of impatience.

It seemed to him that it was rather long before Dean Green came and he would be able to begin the hymn. He had exhausted the pompous style long ago ; he now turned to the sentimental, its direct opposite—from the clear notes of the shepherd's pipe to the most impossible chirping of a chicken. His fancy indubitably wandered among all the little ones who were to spring from this marriage ; he chased them with his fingers saying hush, hush, to them in the treble.

At last Engel had recovered himself so far that he began to realise the difference between the delicate and the coarse, between well-bred and ill-bred individuals ; to the latter he knew that nothing was so delightful as scandal, but this was something altogether unheard of. It needed a Kurt to have thought of this, to have created such a maddening scene. His handkerchief was wet already, his white gloves were almost grey. As he fanned himself and wiped away the perspiration, he glanced anxiously at Milla. She hated him ! He prayed to God. Yes, Consul Emil Engel prayed fervently to God that their sins might not be visited upon this poor innocent girl ! They had deceived her, truly, but with the

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

best intentions in the world. God knew how true this was. But who could have anticipated that so mad a thing should have been attempted as to dishonour the sacred edifice.

Engel did not swear as a rule, he was too refined a man for that, but almost simultaneously with his heartfelt communion with God, he desired with his whole heart that the devil might take the lot of them.

He had recourse to his wet handkerchief again. At the same time the thought was in Milla's mind, "Shall I go?"

Engel saw it in her eyes, in the way she moved on her chair. Fürst saw it also. Both felt it like a million electric shocks : but they could not give up their last hope that Milla was too well-bred to increase the scandal. Engel felt that, even if she remained, he should be, from this time forward, a broken, discredited man ; Fürst felt that if only Milla would go with him before the altar, a career would still be open to him.

But still the Dean did not come ! All thoughts centred on this ; it became intensely painful. All eyes were fixed on the vestry door. Was he ill, or feigning to be so, so as not to come ? Where was the deacon, then ? Make him come ! Why did not Karl Vangen move ? The women in the chancel who had not got over the first fright (there were some who had been obliged to grasp the seats of their chairs to prevent themselves from trembling) were now made really ill by this fresh strain ; several began to cry. "Yes," thought Milla ; "I am to be pitied, dreadfully to

## A GALA DAY IN TOWN AND HARBOUR

be pitied! Oh, if mother had lived!" And she cried bitterly. Every one had conspired against her, who had done nothing. Would old Green now let her sit there so miserably on the stool of repentance before all these horrid, horrid people!

She thus lost sight of the first and important question, and was so tossed about by the feeling of desolation that, when the Dean did at length appear, she felt it consolation, a reward from Heaven.

But if she had not, even for a moment, got sufficiently away from herself to feel why this had been done, those had, who sat below the chancel. Not only those who were in the secret, who were few in number, not only their sympathisers who were numerous; no, every woman felt that it would be shocking, if, after what had occurred, Milla could or would go on. Even if she had been dragged up there—why did she not rise, why did she not leave them? They expected her to do so from one moment to another, but Milla remained seated. Could such a thing be possible, after such a strong appeal to her conscience? Every good woman, who is unfettered, involuntarily takes the part of the weak, of the one who has been wronged. The minds of those in the church were agitated like the waves of the sea. The stir became greater and greater. Was it credible that she would go to the altar with the wretch? Shame on those around her who could countenance such a thing. Every one stared at the altar. Was not old Green coming? He

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

must have had scruples at the last moment about giving them the blessing of the Church. Karl Vangen would never have done so. He was with her who was betrayed and deceived. He was so simple-minded that he believed that the Church's place was there. The grateful glances which his broad face attracted during these few moments would have gilded the vaulted roofs of several churches, or thousands of hymn-books and Bibles. At length they saw by the stir in the chancel that old Green had come at last. Really and truly!

Very slowly and feebly he came, very feeble indeed he looked. "A thorough ecclesiastical compromise," it was whispered about. Just as he reached the altar, the hymn began. All those in the chancel joined in it. In their zeal, their relief, their gratitude to Providence, they all sang; the bridegroom, Engel, the General and the Consul-General, Bernick, Dösen, Riis, the celebrities, the Sheriff, all sang of the first bride who was brought by God himself to the first bridegroom. Not one of them believed it, but they sang so that it was a sin that the organ overpowered them, for such singing of hymns ought to be heard.

Their wives' trebles chimed in; they were so startled that they could not find the hymn, but they all knew it by heart. The one who was the quickest to join in, and who sang the loudest in praise of marriage, was Fru Garman.

Except these and the clerk, no one in the whole church joined in the singing. The stir became so great and so general that a number could not



## A GALA DAY IN TOWN AND HARBOUR

remain sitting, they stood up ; those behind them wanted to see, and stood up also. But Tora rose before any one of them. What those around her had felt, and were feeling with all its violence, was as nothing to what she experienced, for when deeply moved she showed herself her mother's daughter. The journey here had worked her up to a state of excitement, which her constitution could hardly bear.

If for no other reason, still for her own sake, Milla must be prevented from marrying the wretch. For this it was necessary that Tora should show herself, she and her child ; everything else might fail, but this would force Milla to pause—she knew her !

This could only be done if Tora had the will and the courage for it. And she had, for her friends had the will and courage to be with her. It did not merely concern herself, it concerned the school, Milla, a great cause ; it concerned thousands !

No one, least of all herself, had had the slightest doubt but that to stand up with her child in her arms before the bride, would be sufficient. From the moment that Milla had burst into tears in the chancel, but still remained in her place, until now, when old Green had come, Tora's excitement had increased to such an extent that those nearest to her were alarmed ; it could be observed as well from the seat opposite. They knew now that something must be done, upon which neither they nor she had reckoned, before their object could be attained. Tora was Tora, and would be true to herself.

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

Fürst was already at the altar, accompanied by Consul Wingaard ; Engel had walked carefully across the carpet to lead his daughter forward. She rose and allowed the bridesmaids to arrange her train and veil—when Tora sprang forward from her seat.

Every one in the chancel was looking at the bride, who gave her hand to her father and turned with him towards the altar. They did not see Tora come up the steps. There was a sound behind them like the breaking of a wave, and at the same moment something black passed quickly by. The ladies shrieked, the gentlemen grew rigid with dismay. Those at the altar turned round ; Engel staggered backwards ; Tora stood between him and his daughter.

"Do you wish me to lay the child down before you, Milla ? Will you have it to kneel on ?"

"No ! No !" cried Milla in horror. She turned, and with her hands before her she flew from the chancel, her veil streaming behind her.

Every one had risen. Tora had hastened at once to the vestry—she felt that now her strength was exhausted—Miss Hall followed her there.

But when Milla had left the chancel, she did not know where to fly to ; some one ought to come to her, to be with her—her womanly instinct told her that. She turned and looked round bewildered. The vestry door was opened, a harsh cry was heard from it for just so long as was needed for the opening and shutting of a door ; but it was enough. Milla began to cry too. An arm was put round her waist, she was led

## A GALA DAY IN TOWN AND HARBOUR

from the church; it was Nora. From the moment that Milla had yielded, all resentment was over, all anger vanished. Indeed, it was so with most of them. Rendalen was quickly at her side, and then went on before them to make way.

The organist, who had not seen what had gone before, but who, after the first hymn, had expected to hear the words of the service, rose when the movement became general. What was it? He saw the bride out in the aisle, the others still in the chancel, the whole congregation standing up. "*Aber das war kurios! Wird's nichts daraus? Ho—ho! Ich hab' meine zwei tausend.*"

And he began to play the organ. They tried to stop him, but he answered, "What haf they don with the brite? The music shall do her goot."

Hardly had the bellringers heard the organ before they thought, "Now they are married," and began to ring the bells. Hardly had those on board the saluting vessel heard the bells before the guns began to thunder. They were to continue firing until the bride's carriage drew up at the door of the house, and as they could not see this from the ship, a signal was to be made to them. In the general confusion this was forgotten, so on they went—bang, bang, bang! It seemed to them at last that they had fired a great many rounds, but that was other people's affair, so they thundered away as long as they had any powder; for they also had been drinking considerably.

All this caused great amusement. The affair changed from the sublime to the ridiculous.

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

First among the crowd who left the church amid the pealing of the organ, the clash of the bells, the thunder of the cannon ; their laughter was taken up in increasing measure by those in the market-place, and from there it spread over the whole town. In the memory of man there had not been so much laughter at one time as now resounded from the river banks to the most remote houses on the mountain, or out on the Point. The country people went laughing home amid the roar of the cannon, and wherever they came there was laughter.

A gala day in town and harbour. Thunder of cannon and flutter of flags, flags and cannon—and laughter !

At first the bridal party looked at each other with horror ; by ones and twos they made their way out of the church, but the laughter outside was infectious ; when they got home and read the *Spectator*, they laughed too.

The Town Bailiff himself laughed !

Up the avenue walked Nora and Rendalen. The cannon thundered, and they turned round and looked at the flags flying in the town and in the harbour—and laughed. Karl Vangen hurried past them on his long legs ; Tora was at Niels Hansen's. She was terribly exhausted, but calm ; he was going to fetch the carriage—and off he went. No less than fifteen girls passed them at once, going up to Fru Rendalen ; another large group was following them. They did not walk, they raced, and were quickly past.

A little later Fru Rendalen came out on to the

## A GALA DAY IN TOWN AND HARBOUR

steps to meet her son and Nora : they were just the opposite of every one else ; they stopped every moment. Now, just when she wanted them so much. How could they forget her ?

All at once she pulled off her spectacles and wiped them. Then put them on slowly.

Rendalen said, as he walked along the avenue, that there had been a great deal which was one-sided and obscure, too much of a fixed idea in his first lecture, and that there was a great deal in his development as well, which was but half accomplished. Still, "life is a school, and first and foremost concerns schoolmasters." He did not say this in so many words, he had not the least need for anything so stiff and cold. To speak the plain truth, while they involuntarily flew the flags down below for the success of his life's aim, he walked along here and paid his court—to her with the "flickering" hair. It seemed to her that she was quite unworthy, and she brushed a swarm of flies from her eyes. But it was so absolutely impossible not to wish, and so——

They agreed about many, many, many things. The first was that if one has confidence in a work, that confidence helps in its development ; the second was, that when there are two it goes on twice as quickly, or it may be that the last was the first, and the first the last. They really were not accountable.

But fifteen girls were up on the tower at once ; they wanted to hoist one flag to-day which would tell no lie, and also for a reason which was

## THE HERITAGE OF THE KURTS

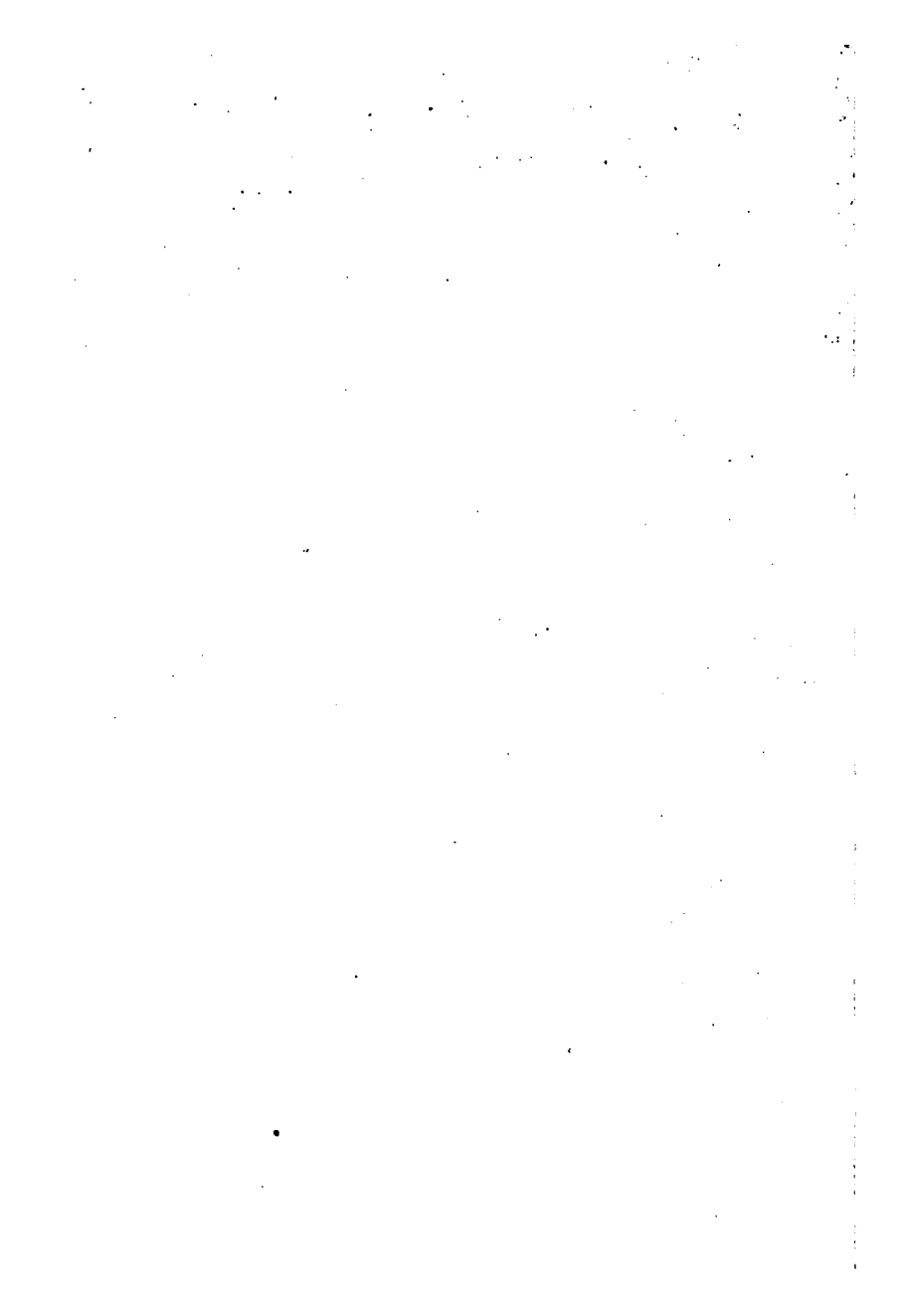
without deception. They called down to ask leave ; Rendalen was at the foot of the steps, he laughed up to them. Nora had sprung away from him—up the steps to Fru Rendalen. She pressed closely, oh, so closely, to her—apparently to put her spectacles on better.

“No, no,” called Rendalen up to the girls on the tower ; “not to-day—for Milla’s sake, but we will do so very soon.”

END OF VOL. II.

Printed by BALLANTYNE & CO. LIMITED  
Tavistock Street, London

100







NEW YORK PUBLIC  
LIBRARY  
REFERENCE DEPARTMENT

book is under no circumstances to be  
taken from the Building